

DYING THOUGHTS

IN

THREE PARTS.

PART I. A *Mé morandum*, in order to a serious Preparation for DYING.

PART II. The BELIEVER'S *Pleasant Prospect* through the Valley of Death.

PART III. A *Contemplation of Heaven*, or the BELIEVER'S *Pisgah-sight* of the HEAVENLY CANAAN.

TOGETHER WITH

A CONCLUSION, shewing what will make the Heaven-born Soul to be often groaning and panting for the *Glory that is to be REVEALED*.

By the late Reverend Mr WILLIAM CRAWFORD
Minister of the Gospel at *Wilton*. ————— 12

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TO THE
R E A D E R:

THE worthy author having in his introduction given his reader an account of the rise and occasion of the following meditations, there is scarce any thing left us to do, unless to assure the world they are really his, being left by him, at his death, transcribed, ready for the press, carefully revised, and in many places corrected by his own hand.

This assurance may perhaps be necessary for strangers: but those who knew Mr *Crawford*, especially such as had the happiness at any time to sit under his ministry, will have no occasion for our testimony. These familiar, and yet striking illustrations of divine truths, that strength of reasoning and expression, by which he in a manner forced them upon his hearers, and, above all, that easy and unaffected fervour of devotion which distinguished his public performances, shew themselves in every part of this; tho' it is not to be imagined, that all these should appear

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equally in all: and yet one may venture to say, that there are few productions of this sort where reason and devotion are more closely united; and even in those parts where he found it necessary to support some of his principles, in a more abstracted way of reasoning, than perhaps every one's capacity will easily reach the strength of, he has taken care by suitable and easy reflections to bring them down to the lowest.

The author's eminent humility in his lifetime, and singular aversion to every thing that had the least air of panegyric, will not allow us to set before the world these great and good qualities, which all who knew him agreed he was master of in a very uncommon degree, whereby he was singularly fitted for such a work as this. One thing we may venture to say, without offending in any kind, that sure there never was a man whom providence had bestowed more pains on to form, and as it were educate on purpose for handling such a subject: for besides what he takes notice of himself, he passed almost his whole life in a very near prospect of death. When he was very young, besides the loss of an eye in the small pox, he contracted an incurable weakness on his lungs, and a cough, which

To the READER.

which attended him throughout his life, with such a disposition to inflammation in these parts that he was given for lost, almost every year, for a long tract of time.

This turned his thoughts so much upon the subject here handled, that he made it the business of his ministry to teach his hearers how to die in a continued tract of sermons upon this important subject, as no doubt many of them will remember, and it is no small commendation of this little book, that we have here laid to our hands the pith and substance of almost all Mr *Crawford's* sermons. And the parishioners of *Wilton* particularly will we hope embrace it as their beloved pastor's legacy to them, who being dead yet speaketh, and now inculcates the same things from the press, which he had so often and warmly pressed upon them from the pulpit.

These meditations might have appeared with a good deal more beauty, had the author's modesty allowed him to give us his high strains of devotion in his own name, which he has chosen to put in the mouths of others of God's people as their sentiments and attainments. But this is so far from being a fault, that it gives us a noble exam-

ple of humility and self-denial. And, upon the whole, we have good reason to hope, that such a performance, from such a hand, will be, thro' the divine blessing, of great use to every soul who has any concern about death and eternity, and desires either to live or die well; which, as it was the author's earnest desire, so is the hearty prayer of

ALEX. COLDEN.

JO. GILCHRIST.

RO. RICCALTOUN.

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DYING THOUGHTS.

PART I.

*A-MEMORANDUM, in order to a serious
Preparation for DYING.*

INTRODUCTION.

[WILTON-Manse, March 12. 1733.]

IT has been the good and holy will of God, to exercise me often, his poor unworthy servant, with sore sickness and trouble, which also has been of long continuance: and for this I bless his name. In all humility, I desire not only to justify, but also to thank him, that the afflictions I have met with have been only rods, when they might have been scorpions; and, for one affliction, I have met with a thousand mercies.

By his good hand upon me, I have had the sentence of death in myself now for some years; and death, judgment, and eternity, have been set before me, in lively colours. And as this has often employed my mind, in the contemplation of death, and its consequences; so also it has excited me unto a serious enquiry, about the true state of my soul, and whether I am actually prepared for dying.

This winter-season especially, I have been the most part thereof in a very languishing condition, labouring under long, heavy, and dangerous sickness.

And

And now that it hath pleased God, in his mercy, to grant me some more of a short respite, I think it necessary, for mine own satisfaction and upstirring, to lay before myself a few meditations upon death, both in its dark and light side. And while I am viewing it, in its nature, its causes and consequences, and what there is to support a gracious soul against its terrors, I shall, in the progress of these meditations, make some reflections, whereby the soul either turns in upon itself, or makes some useful observations on the several particulars.

“ O father of spirits, and father of lights, from whom all wisdom, and every good gift, descends! O Son of the living God, who art the light and life of souls! O blessed Spirit of grace, given to convince the world of sin, righteousness and judgment, and to lead thy people unto all truth! give light and life, I pray thee, unto a poor, dark and dead heart. O shine, with the beams of thy vital heavenly light, upon a soul that lies grovelling in the dust, and is sadly beclouded with the mists and darkness of sense! how little is it that I know of things unseen and eternal! O blessed God, one in three, and three in one, clear up to my soul this great and important subject! thy light is never more needful, than when one is passing through the dark vale of death: and if there be but a passing it in the thoughts of my mind, there is no seeing through the same, but by a divine ray from the fountain of light. O that in thy light I may here see light! may I be helped, through the merit and grace of my Redeemer, to view death, and all that follows upon it, really as they are, without any disguise! And may the intimate sense of my heart, and the stated temper of my soul, correspond to any right views thou art pleased to give of what so vastly concerns mine eternal estate. *Amen.*”

MEDITATION I.

Man has a Soul as well as a Body.

THIS, as 'tis evident from the account of man's make, when 'tis said, *The Lord God formed the body of man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul*; so 'tis no less evident, from every man's experience, that he has an active self-moving principle within him, and that this puts life and motion in the flesh he carries about with him, and, by a brisk agitation of all the parts thereof, keeps it from mouldering and dissolving in corruption, until there be either such an attrition of its vessels, or such a conflict and jumble of all its humours, as that the organ, having lost its form and structure, becomes altogether untunable, and unapt for the soul to work upon it.

Have I a soul as well as a body, why should it not have at least an equal share of my care and concern? Why should I neglect any essential part of myself, if I have any aim and design to be happy? How can I attain the same, if any part belonging essentially to my nature be slighted, and altogether unprovided for? And yet more unnatural cruelty would it be against myself, if that which I find to be the only vital and active power in me, yea the very principle of all corporeal sensations and pleasures, should be forgot, as if it were a thing wholly to be despised. Have I then a soul, a soul of such capacity, as that I find by certain experience it cannot be satiate with worldly things? This soul, whatever it is, must be taken care of and provided for; and according as I find its nature and necessities, so its provisions must be suitable to them.

MEDITATION II.

*The Soul of Man is a Substance distinct from,
and more excellent than his Body.*

WAVING any philosophical inquiry into the nature of the soul, as not suiting our present design; that the soul in man is a substance distinct from his body, is obvious to every man's observation. For when the body hath done growing in bigness, and tallness of stature, the soul often hath its greatest growth in knowlege, wisdom and understanding. When the body sits still, and moves not hand or foot, the soul can fly, with all its faculties, as high as heaven in a moment. When the body is weak and languishing, the soul is often lively and vigorous. What *John* said of *Gaius*, that he had a healthful soul, tho' a sickly body, may be observed of severals, who have carried about with them feeble, decaying, dying bodies, who yet have lively and well complexioned souls.

How many are there, who are not only weak in all the bodily functions that are purely animal, but also labour in great debility of nerves, spirits, and whatever can be imagined as instruments of thought, who yet have very active and contemplative souls. Yea, further, the soul hath griefs and joys peculiar to itself, which the body can neither add unto, nor diminish from. If the soul be wounded, no corporeal thing can heal it. On the other hand, the soul hath felt such joys, as that the flames that burned its body could not extinguish its joy.

And as the soul is distinct from its body, so 'tis more excellent: 'tis a noble substance, breathed in us, by the father of spirits; 'tis a candle, lighted in us by the father of lights; 'tis a principle in us, that
not

Medit. II. *Dying Thoughts.*

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not only understandeth, frameth notions of things, and reasoneth, but also it correcteth all the misrepresentations of sense or fancy. 'Tis able to judge not only of the present, but also of the future existence of things, and likewise of their proportions and disproportions. Yea also it can contemplate the nature and perfections of God. All which is above the power of matter. It can sit down also and judge upon its own acts, which the body cannot do: yea it can bid the body, and all its concerns, farewell for a while; and, by retiring into its own closet operations, it can behave like a separate spirit, even while in the body.

Yea further, 'tis an incorruptible immortal substance, which the body is not. 'Tis the breath of God, and therefore cannot but be immortal and incorruptible: and we are conscious to ourselves, that 'tis a simple and uncompounded being, and hence can have no principles of dissolution. Yea we are sensible, that self motion and self-vitality is its very essence. Matter cannot live, unless life be imparted to it, and it can be when it does not live: but a soul, tho' it depends for being on its original, yet life is so essential to its constitution, that when it ceaseth to live it ceaseth to be.

And who can imagine, that what is most God-like in man should be the only thing that finally perisheth? or that the dull matter about us, that hath no relation to God, except that it is his workmanship, should still exist, and continue in its being; and yet the soul, that resembles him, bears his image, and is capable of converse and intercourse with him, should be annihilate and destroyed for ever?

And whatever loss some may think they are at in conceiving of a spirit, yet 'tis most certain, we have more clear and distinct idea of spirit than of matter itself: for as 'tis only the attributes of matter we

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have

have any positive conception of; for, strip it of these, it wholly escapes our sight; so let a soul be reviewed in its modes and attributes, there is nothing in nature we conceive more certainly and clearly. And tho' we even wanted an intuitive view of the soul, we need not much wonder at it, since it is so in our bodily sight; for the eye, tho' it see every thing else, cannot see itself, at least directly and immediately.

Since I have a soul within me, distinct from the body, and far more excellent, and which also is of eternal duration; then 'tis evident, that wordly and temporal enjoyments can never portion this soul of mine. What hath a spirit to do with bags of gold, and barns of corn? It would not be more incongruous to imagine, that a body can be fed with thoughts, than that a spiritual substance can be nourished with lumps of matter and clods of earth. And what can an immortal spirit make at last of dying honours, corruptible riches, and perishing pleasures? For if, this night, God should require this soul of me, whose shall these things be?

But, O my soul, dost thou hear of *durable riches and righteousness*? covet and labour for these, or else poor thou shalt be through eternity. O my soul, dost thou hear of the *bread that endureth to everlasting life*? hunger for this; else thou shalt starve for ever! O my soul, dost thou hear of *glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life*; or of an *incorruptible crown that fadeth not away*? be ambitious of this, and labour to attain it, else thou shalt be in everlasting contempt. Well then, through the grace of God it shall be my daily care and business, to *look not to things seen, but to things unseen*; for the things that are seen are only temporal, but the things unseen are eternal. Hence I'll lay up my treasure in heaven, and where my treasure is, there shall my heart be also. 'Tis the favour of God, conformity to him, and com-

communion with him, that souls can only live by, as being suitable to their natures, and answerable to their duration: and as I value these above all the world, so it shall be my daily care to attain and maintain them.

MEDITATION III.

The Union between Soul and Body is very wonderful.

HOW unreasonable is it to disbelieve the mystery of God and of his Christ, because we cannot comprehend the same, when we understand so little of our own make! Or how an immortal spirit is so linked to a lump of flesh, as to make mutual impressions upon each other, as every one feels?

By this union the soul hath a power over its body, to order it to this or that; while yet it cannot command any thing that belongs to the vital functions. By a simple command it can carry the whole body hither and thither; but it cannot by any command make the concoction to be better, nor the circulation of the blood to be brisker, nor the pulse to beat faster.

Our souls are immaterial substances, distinct from their bodies; and this, one would think, should make them capable, either of dwelling in their bodies, or retiring from them at pleasure. But 'tis not so, the cords of the union between soul and body being only in God's hand, either to loose them or keep them fast; for being created, and finite spirits, they are confined by certain laws to their bodies, which God the Author of nature can only loose.

Our souls are strong and active substances, and one would think they might easily command the body, a weak, inert, and unactive lump of matter, and so

keep up the house above their heads as long as they pleased: but 'tis not so; for however strong, spiritous and active the soul is, and the body a weak unresisting thing, yet 'tis but a small part of the body that is entirely at the soul's command, and scarce ought of its vital functions is so.

Our souls are vital, self subsistent, immortal spirits, And one would think from this, they should never cease to communicate vital influences to their own bodies: but yet in this case they are also so limited and determined, as to loose at the Creator's pleasure, their grips of the body, though nothing is impaired of the self-moving power and vigour of the soul.

Lord, I have reason to say with the Psalmist, *I am fearfully and wonderfully made!* the form and composition of the body, and the structure, variety and absolute fitness of all its parts, for the uses they are designed for, is wonderful! the noble powers of the soul in understanding, reasoning, and in embracing with vigour what it apprehends to be good, and recoiling from what it thinks hurtful, are yet more wonderful. But that such different substances, as an immaterial spirit and an earthly body, should be united together; that a mind and a piece of matter, that a thought and a clod of earth should be affixed to each other, this is perfect mystery!

Lord, thou hast lodged this soul of mine in a clay tabernacle, that therein I might give unto thee that tribute of glory that is due unto thee from this material world. And I desire to answer thy design in this, by rendering thee the homage and praise that is due to thy wisdom, power and goodness, shining so brightly in the sun, moon and stars, and in all the other visible works of thy hand.

Thou hast also placed my soul within me, that I may be capable of taking in all the enjoyments and pleasant sensations that can be had in matter, or which

it can occasion. For such is thy exuberant goodness, that thou would have no kind of pleasure wanting to the entertainment of thy creatures; and thou hast created nothing that can minister delight, without also making faculties and powers capable of tasting the same, which dull matter can never be! hence I desire to give thee thanks for all thy temporal benefits, being they are both for thy glory and thy creature's comfort.

Only I beg, thou mayest not let me forget myself, and forget thy design in placing me in the body. I pray, O Lord, I may not be left to sit down and brood upon matter, and overlook all other comforts but what savours of earth: but grant, that by thy grace, I may be able to govern and set bounds on all my corporeal appetites, and make all temporal delights servicable to the greater pleasures of the mind, that ly in divine exercises and enjoyments.

MEDITATION IV.

Death is the Wages and native Consequence of Sin.

THOU' the union between soul and body is dissolvable, yet 'tis only sin that could make the separation actual. What is there in it puzzling, that man, if he had persisted in innocency, would have continued in an incorruptible state? I find little difficulty in conceiving a body of such a make, as that the parts thereof shall never dissolve into corruption: or that a body may be made without such *effluvia*, as cause such a continual desfluence of parts, as tends to the destruction of the whole.

On the other hand, whatever was *Adam's* original constitution, 'tis certain, that when sin entered into the world, death must enter with it. And this not only by a statute from heaven, pronouncing upon all mankind, *dust thou art, and unto dust thou must re-*

turn, but also from the very nature of the thing: for were there no sentence from heaven dooming us to die, our present state of sin and corruption makes death unavoidable; that is to say, sin fills us with pride, malice, envy, and such exorbitant passions, and irregular covetings of every kind, as make great impressions both on the solids and fluids of the body, and disturbs their harmonious consilience; and hence come diseases and death.

I see from this, that sin is such a mortal poison, which, whenever it infects a man, never leaves him again till it hath dissolved his frame. It may be indeed disguised with a deceitful varnish, so as pleasures may appear as leading the van: but they are mortal, killing pleasures, and followed with hell from beneath, moving after them to meet or overtake them. The deadly hook, whereby one is ensnared to sin, may be covered or coloured with the bait of pleasure or profit, but no sooner is it swallowed down, but it preys upon a man's life, and never leaves him till it make an end of him. I may see the evil of sin in the ghastly looks, the heavy groans and the quivering lips, and much more in the trembling consciences of dying men. And I see that I cannot love sin, without wronging mine own soul; for to chuse sin is to chuse death: and why should I die? Why should I be in love with death? It repents me, O Lord, that ever I have done evil in thy sight, and wherein I have done iniquity, I will thro' grace do so no more.

MEDITATION V.

The Sting of Death lies in the guilt and Dominion of Sin.

IF sin doth reign, and the guilt thereof cleave to the soul, then death not only parts between soul and

and body, but it also separates between the soul and God, who is the only life and happiness of souls. Death, to a person that is unsanctified and unpardoned, not only kills his body, but it kills also his soul; for it leaves nothing for such a soul to live on for ever.

The soul hath faculties that are active: and if these faculties be entertained with objects suitable in the other world, the soul finds comfort and refreshment according to its mind and wish: But if not, it dies; that is, it has active powers, but without any thing agreeable to work on, and so they are as good as none, being good for nothing. And 'tis through the guilt, stain and power of sin, that death bereaves the soul for ever of all such objects and entertainments as suit the nature and answer the exigencies of spirits.

What do the necessities of spirits crave and require. Why, 'tis truth, light, goodness, purity; for spiritual enjoyments are only for spirits. And if the soul at death is bereaved of all temporals, and has neither capacity nor taste for spirituals. how poor and perishing is its condition! sin hath stript it of all enjoyments peculiar to spirits, and then comes death, which spoils it of all the adventitious delights it had by its union with its own body: and now what is left after for a soul to live on? And since nothing is left it whereon it can subsist, it must pine away in its sins, and be a dying eternally.

O how wretched is that man's condition, that hath the all of his comfort hanging upon the bare thread of this life, so soon to be cut and broken in pieces!

Is a soul dead in sin, so as that it cannot discern nor affect the things of God? Doth it savour nothing but earth, and taste nothing but carnal gratifications? Then if that soul dare open its eyes to look up, it will see death standing before it in a terrible form, ready to strike home and divide it from its body: and thus it will put a final period to all its comforts. A thought

this is, which may be enough to waste the spirits, wither the heart, and consume the bones of all unregenerate sinners, and to awaken them to mind the great concern.

But is a soul justified and sanctified, so that above all things it affects and loves the blessed God, and amiable Redeemer, and endeavours after the nearest conformity to him, and prefers spiritual to temporal comforts, and values an interest in the promises above all earthly possessions? That soul can lose nothing by dying, but rather may long for it, as being its full redemption from all miseries.

MEDITATION VI.

Death is the Soul's Separation from its Body.

THAT at death the soul retires from its body, every one is sensible of. The soul doth dwell in its body as its house and tenement, but for which, as *Theophrastus* observed, it often pays a very dear rent; and that soul removes at last from his lodging, whereby the body, that was so much gratified and pampered, is now left desolate and laid by, as a neglected thing. The soul which used great forecast in making provisions for its body, lest it should moulder down and crumble to dust, now gives up its office, and looks no more after the same till the general resurrection. The soul gave life, beauty and motion to the body, but now it leaves the same, whereby the body becomes a loathsome carcase, and as despicable as the dirt under our feet.

Such a thought as this should not pass slightly through my mind. Is the soul the only thing in me that subsists, and lives after death? Doth it survive the funerals of the body, and exists a vital substance for ever? Doth death only cause it remove and change its dwelling? Which then is most worthy of my most seri-

serious care and concern; the body that will soon become a dead inactive lump, and moulder into dust, or the soul that is the living and quickening spirit? And what deserves most of my time, the frail corruptible flesh, or the immortal and incorruptible spirit in me? How extreme were the dotage, should I prefer time-gratifications before eternal joys; or a mouldering house to the immortal inhabitant that for a short time lodges therein?

MEDITATION VII.

Death is the Soul's parting with all corporeal Enjoyments.

WHEN the body is put off and laid by, there is an end of all its pleasures and delights; and nothing now is left to serve the taste, the touch, the sight, the scent, or the ear, of that little piece of organized clay, the *human body*. A separate soul can neither eat nor drink, marry nor give in marriage, nor taste ought of any of the enjoyments that are peculiar to the animal life. And so, when death comes, there is a farewell given to all the pleasures of the five senses; no more any of those grateful sensations that are from hearing, seeing, tasting, touching, or smelling.

It shall then, through the grace of God, be my daily study, to inure and train up my soul, in such rational, spiritual and heavenly delights, as can go with it through death into the other world. For this end, I'll delight myself daily in God, and in all his amiable and ravishing perfections; and my meditation of Christ shall be sweet: for many a pleasant thought I may have of his mighty achievements, glorious victories and ravishing love, and of the great and rich benefits of his purchase.

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They are pleasures of this kind that are the most durable, as well as the most excellent and satisfying delights. For who, that believes his soul is more excellent than his body, can yet imagine, that it owes all its happiness to dull and stupid matter; or that it must so forget itself and its native powers, as to bow down to serve its body for all its pleasures? What a pitiful state would the naked soul be in, upon such a supposition as this! and how dark and disconsolate would the valley of death be to the best! all the interval between the dissolution and resurrection, what poor and destitute circumstances would a soul be in, if it owed its all to its body! and how could the apostle *Paul* have longed to be dissolved, if it were so with the soul that it had nothing in itself, or of its own to comfort it, after it had lost its body! no man can believe such a thing of his soul, but he that doth not mind he hath one, or he that hath drowned it in sensual delights, or stupified it into a clod of earth.

MEDITATION VIII.

Death is the Soul's removing out of this World.

THE soul moves and rules its bodily machine; and hereby the man takes a few turns up and down on earth, and then he ceases to be any more in it. His soul hath taken its flight, and is gone; and even the dull lumber of flesh he carried about with him is laid out of sight: so that the man is no more in the world; for no part of him is any more seen, unless it be his bones, or skull, or dust, digged up by the grave-maker, to make room for another; and who knows who that is!

Then 'tis certain, that every step I take in this world is a stepping nearer to the next. And, O my soul,

Soul, how art thou prepared for so great a change !
 I am shortly to remove and be gone from this world,
 and have I laid up treasures in the world to come ?
 All the entertainments of the other world are of a
 pure and spiritual kind ; and is my heart purified by
 faith, and prepared to enjoy them ? I am making
 post-haste through this wilderness ; I am carried fast
 down the stream of time, and I know not how soon
 I shall launch into the ocean of eternity ; am I fit to
 drink of the rivers of pleasures that fill it ? I have
 met with several waves that have made breach upon
 breach upon this frail tabernacle ; and it may be the
 next wave shall drive me to the shore that is beyond
 time : and ought it not to be my chief and daily bu-
 siness to make provision for so great a change ?

M E D I T A T I O N IX.

*Death is the bereaving a Man of all his earth-
 ly Comforts.*

WHEN death closes a man's eyes, he sees not
 any more the good that is to be seen under the
 sun, nor can he enjoy any thing that is to be had in
 the land of the living. Death separates the most in-
 timate friends : it divorceth the husband from his
 wife, and the wife from her husband ; it ravishes
 children from their parents, and parents from their
 children ; it bereaves a man of relatives, as dear to
 him as his own soul ; it spoils him in a moment of
 all that, with great care, toil and unrest, he hath been
 heaping together for many years.

What should then engage me so much to this world,
 and the things therein ? Why should it engross so much
 of my time and care, and so much divide my affec-
 tions ? Can such short-lived comforts offer any thing
 that is enough to seduce my soul from the all-sufficient
 and eternal God ? or to enchant me to a forgetfulness
 of

of my blessed Redeemer? Vain world, canst thou go with a man beyond time, and keep with him through eternity? Canst thou go with a soul unto the next world and therein either purchase a room in heaven, or make an easier bed in hell? And since it doth not so much as pretend to any thing of this, I'll say with the Psalmist, *What wait I for from this world, since there is nothing in it but a vain shew, and I'll avouch that my hope, O Lord, is only in thee.*

MEDITATION X.

Death is a leaving the Soul to act by its sole native Powers.

AT death man becomes a naked soul, having neither sensible organs to act upon, or to be acted by; and so the soul is left to be entertained with what is peculiarly suitable to its nature and inherent necessities. Hence, if that soul is not envelopt in the darkness of sense, or benighted and confounded with irregular passions, it will be entertained in a way like itself. And what more agreeable objects can it be conversant about, than truth, wisdom, goodness, order, &c? And what greater happiness, than in contemplating, admiring, loving and embracing the truth that is original and archetypal, and the goodness that is infinite?

On the other hand, if there be nothing but the horror of darkness upon the understanding, and the confusion of carnality on the will and affections; then the shadows of an everlasting evening will be stretched out upon that soul, and it will dwell for ever in that dark vault of hell, where the sun shines no more at all upon it, nor the voice of joy and gladness heard in it, nor any thing that is holy or pure, or pleasant, or joyful, shall light upon it for ever.

If I shall be happy or miserable in the next world,

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I. according to that state of mind, and that temper of spirit, wherewith I go out of this: O then, how much doth it concern me to attain and keep a heavenly frame in my soul! if the enjoyments of the other world are such as are peculiar to spirits; then it shall be my care daily, through divine grace, to get a heavenly turn of mind. I'll make it my serious study to retire much from the world, and to live above all its sensible impressions, and to be conversant with God, by turning all the powers and affections of my soul daily and directly on him.

Should the world, or any thing in it have more of my heart than God? Should my delight be confined to these things that are foreign to the nature of my soul, and no ways adapted to its exigencies; what would next become of me, when stript of all these enjoyments?

Well then, I am not straitned as between two in this matter. The case is plain, and 'tis a determined point with me, that God is better than the world, and heaven is better than earth, and that the eternal and inexhaustible fulness of light, life and joy that is in the blessed Redeemer, and overflowing from him on all the blessed inhabitants of the other world, is sufficient to draw, please, and satisfy my soul for ever. *Whom have I in the heavens but thee, O Lord, and there is none upon earth my soul desires besides thee!* this God shall be my God for ever and ever, and my guide unto death, *And when heart and flesh shall fail, he will be the strength of my heart and portion for ever.*

MEDITATION XI.

Death is the opening a new Scene, either of Joys or Sorrows.

THIS follows upon what is said. When at death the soul retires from the body, it takes its objects, whether grateful or disagreeable, in an immediate manner, and without the ministry of the senses. Here while the soul is in a state of vital union with its body, we can scarce reach to any thing directly and immediately, but must perceive through the winding avenues of the senses.

I do not mean, as if separate spirits knew nothing about material objects. I see nothing either from scripture or reason for denying them a capacity of praising God for all his works, as well as the angels in heaven. And how otherwise could there be joy in heaven at the conversion of a sinner? But my meaning is, that whereas we know things here only by the mediation of the senses, there they know them immediately: and whereas here we know things by their species or images, there they see them intuitively, or have a real perception of things as they are in themselves; which, in my opinion, is the most direct and easy way of taking in objects, and liable to no difficulties, but what arise from our present way far more inexplicable.

Had I been made a naked soul, and with no higher faculties, but with another way of using them than what I have at present; and one told me of certain spirits or intelligences, dwelling in a little organized piece of matter, who by pictures and images of things laid up somewhere, none knows well, their memory can bring back things as remote from them, as one moment of time can be conceived distant from another,

her, and their imagination can travel over the breadth of the earth, yea in one instant can pass from one end of heaven to another : I would be strangely puzzled to think, how this could be, and would soon begin to ask, what these images are : are they somethings or nothings ? If they are nothings, what can they serve for ? If they are somethings, where are they laid, and how brought out in such order ? Either they are material or immaterial : if immaterial, what holds them, or how are they true representations of things material ? if material, what can hold them ? A head, to be sure, no less than this terraqueous globe, or rather as wide as the circumference of the heavens. And why, would I say, might not this spirit as well see material objects, as the material images of them ? And when, I had thus tired myself with a thousand insuperable difficulties in this matter, I would certainly think I could demonstrate that to be impossible, which in my present circumstances I find is fact. But still, as I am even presently situate, I think it easier to conceive a spirit's immediate intuition backwards and forwards, than its taking in objects in such a round-about way from the senses, as by the second hand : nor do I find any difficulty about it, that amounts to any more than saying, that it is not our present way of perceiving.

'Tis no disparagement to the enjoyments of pure spirits, that they are not impressions from sensible objects; nor are they the less entertaining. On the contrary, as the senses of brutes are more ignoble than the understanding of men; so the objects of reason and understanding must far exceed the objects of mere sense.

I find that, even in material things, the most gross and palpable objects are the basest. 'Tis the subtle parts in us, called the animal spirits, that have most of the virtue of life : and much more the immaterial

al substance in us. And as the soul is more excellent than the body, so invisible things are as perceptible by our invisible, as visible things are by our visible part. And if intellectual objects, meeting with intellectual powers, can be any entertainment for pure separate souls, they cannot miss a perfect happiness in the other world.

The glory of this world lies in its being, as it were, a map or picture of the invisible God. The beauty and the pleasure of it ly in this, that we cannot open our eyes, but we behold his eternal Godhead, in its wisdom, power and goodness. And if we can find such pleasant entertainments in the contrivances of God's wisdom, and in the glorious effects of his goodness and power; how much more will the soul be delighted and ravished, in seeing immediately these glorious excellencies in themselves, and in their first seat, which it can do without the senses.

Another thing which I may attain without being obliged for it to my senses, is the loving of God; I mean a rational complacency in him, and a deliberate motion of the soul towards him. And as every thing in God is infinitely delectable, here is a spring of endless joy to a soul in a separate state. And if I carry such a supreme love to God, and the blessed Jesus with me into the other world, I cannot miss a happiness there; unless there was no God, no Saviour, or nothing excellent and divine, to be found in it.

Another thing I find grateful and entertaining, and for which I do not depend on my sensible organ, is a well pleasedness of soul with the holiness, and other moral perfections of God. To be pleased with this is to be delighted with the beauty of his face. If therefore I shew my delight in the holiness of God, by hating and resisting all evil, this secures the future happiness of a separate soul, without the assistance of sensible objects, since all requisite to true happiness

is

here found, viz. the most excellent object, and a faculty fitted up for the same.

Again, as faith is all we have for vision while here away, so this is so different from living by sense, as that 'tis opposite to the same; and as faith, representing to us the work, the reasons and the design of our redemption, has nothing to do with the impressions from sense, so 'tis sufficient to secure us of joy and delight in the other world, if the most glorious discoveries of the divine perfections, shining so brightly in Christ, or if the making use of these perfections as our necessities require and our capacities can admit, or the having a correspondent impression of them in our minds, and conformity to them in our lives, can contribute any thing to our joy and delight.

M E D I T A T I O N XII.

Death is the Soul's Entrance into the invisible World.

WHEN the soul is separated from its body, it goes into a world that's out of sight, a world which the dim and short-sighted eye of sense cannot reach unto. The flesh that hangs about us parts this world from the next, which as soon as it is put off, the soul enters into a new world, or at least into a new manner of living in this world. While we are here, *the Lord turneth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it*: in the other world, *the face of God's throne is turned upon them*; and *hades*, that is to say, the invisible world, is naked before them, and even that dark and horrid part of it, called *destruction*, is without a covering.

O my soul! thou seest from this, the need there is of faith, which is the only evidence of things unseen and eternal. Thou seest not the invisible world, but

as little didst thou see, or could have any notion of the light of the sun, or of any thing else in this visible world, when thou wast shut up in the dark cell of the womb. And when thou hast had already the experience of two ways of taking in agreeable objects, darest thou think that God may not open up a third, as much more perfect than thy present way of entertaining thyself, as thy present entertainments are more perfect than those in the womb? And if thou think it reasonable to be held here as a *viator*, in a state of trial, in order to be trained up for a perfect future happiness, why shouldst thou not think, that thou must come to thy most perfect state by some great and remarkable changes, as well as by several gradual steps of preparation; that is, as the *foetus* in the womb is still advancing in growth, till it be ripe for coming into this world, which hitherto had been an invisible world to it; not because there was no light in this world, but because it was not admitted to its light: so also the spiritual life being given unto the renewed soul, it grows more and more, till it comes to a perfect stature in Christ; and when death separates it from the body, it is an opening to it the womb of a new morning, or the light of a new world, invisible to it here only, because the soul is not brought forth into that light.

MEDITATION XIII.

Death is the Soul's Passage into unknown Regions.

AS this follows from the last, so it carries something more in it. For every thing unseen, is not there-for unknown. But the Lord poses all mortals with respect to this. *Job xxxviii. 17. Have the gates of death been opened to thee? or hast thou seen through the*

the doors of the shadow of death? Death is the portal unto vast unknown regions: hast thou looked through this portal, and thereby seen and been able to make a discovery of the vast amplitude of the invisible worlds, and of the manner, order, number, quantity and excellence of their inhabitants and enjoyments?

But tho' the regions of the invisible state be unknown to me, they are all well known to my Redeemer, the Lord *Emmanuel*, who is the governor of these lands, and hath all the mansions therein at his disposal; and therefore I am willing to follow him even unto unknown lands. 'Tis an unknown country, but I have his word for it that the land is good, and that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, what store of blessings the Lord hath laid up there for his people. And it doth not disparage, but rather recommend the excellency of the heavenly regions, to tell us they are far above any thing we ever saw or experienced here.

And how suitable, yea how necessary to our present state is it, that we should live by faith and not by sight? For if the whole invisible world were made naked before us, did the brightness of heaven's glory strike upon our senses, did we see the many millions and order of God's servants about his throne, how noble their work, and how rapturous their joy; or did we with our eyes behold the rueful horrid looks, and heard with our ears the roarings and yellings of the damned, tormented in unquenchable flames: as all this would be inconsistent with a state of trial and probation, and inconsistent with the great ends for which God hath placed us in this world, so also it would put an end to many excellent graces, whereby God is so much glorified. For as there could be no occasion for faith, and all its glorious achievements, so as little for implicit resignation to God,

and an absolute surrender of ourselves to the love, service and honour of our Redeemer. But, as the case now stands, as there is an absolute necessity of faith, so also of implicit obedience to the will of God. I know not perfectly what are all the entertainments of the world in these unknown regions; and therefore I know not what dispositions, virtues and duties are absolutely necessary to make me capable of them: but he knows that country, and the good things in it, who is the governor thereof; and therefore he knows best what he should require of me, and what I should do in order to inherit the same, and to his will I desire to conform in all things.

MEDITATION XIV.

Death is the door to Eternity.

TIS the soul's passing out of time into eternity. We are carried down the stream of time; and, when death comes, time is swallowed up in long, long eternity. O amazing eternity! what shall I compare thee unto? Thou art an age of ages, never expiring, but always like itself, to-day, yesterday, and for ever, without any change. When the soul hath lived ten thousand times ten thousand years, 'tis never one moment nearer the end of eternity. Let imagination start as far forward as it can, it cannot come nearer the end, or nearer the middle, of boundless eternity! yea, tho' all the angels in heaven, and all men upon earth, should do nothing but employ their time in numbering up the ages of eternity, and though they multiply the product of their several sums unto the utmost of arithmetic progression; yet that huge product of all their multiplication could bear no proportion, nor come never a whit nearer the end of eternity. A thousand years to eternity are
not

not as a drop of water to the sea, or as a small gravel-stone in comparison of the whole sand; nor even as a watch in the night, when we are asleep, and have no perception of any duration. For there is still some proportion between the least duration or number and the greatest, if that greatest hath any bounds; but in long eternity there is no measure nor bounds. And hence apprehension is dazzled, and invention is confounded, when they go about to conceive the same. But, O astonishing *eternity*! tho' I cannot comprehend or search thee out, yet may I never forget thee! I am running with post-haste out of time into eternity; and 'tis eternity that makes another hell in hell, and another heaven in heaven. What augments the misery of the one, and the happiness of the other, is, that they are eternal. An eternal misery is a misery ever increasing, and never coming to its uttermost, and eternal happiness is a happiness that's ever growing, and never coming nearer an end: O that this word, *eternity*, were engraven on my heart, as with an iron pen, and with the point of a Diamond! O that I did always bear it in my mind, and did always make use of it as a preservative against fawning pleasures, enticing lusts, tempting devils, and an ensnaring world!

Have I an eternity before me? then, tho' the Lord should require, that I should spend a thousand years in watchings and fastings, in hunger and cold, in dens and caverns of the earth, I could not have reason to complain of this, in order to a blessedness thro' eternity. But if what the Lord requires is more level to our strength and capacity, and more suitable to our frame, infirmities and frailties, how inexcusable is it not to be employing my time, mind and care, chiefly in doing all that's necessary to be done in time, in order to reach the long and bright day of a glorious eternity?

MEDITATION XV.

Death is the gate whereby impenitent sinners enter into hell.

AS soon as an ungodly soul is rent from his body he is in hell; he sinks into the bottomless pit of destruction, where he is exquisitely and eternally tormented with the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched. O the bitterness of eternal death? O the extreme misery of hell! where nothing will be heard but loud shrieking, Wo, wo, wo, for ever!

How will these wretched ghosts pore, in their deep thoughts, on the time past, and on the eternity that is to come, and for ever will be coming! Then they will remember, that they (at least many of them) lived in a land of *Goshen*, enlightened with the fairest noon-tide of the gospel that ever the sun beheld; that they had many instructions, heard many powerful sermons, and were warned many a time not to come into that place: and yet, all being slighted, while others come from the East and West, and sit down in *Abraham's* bosom, and shine in the light of eternal glory, they are chained in everlasting horrible darkness: And whilst others triumph in the presence of God and his angels, they have no other associates but grim and grizly devils; and while others eat bread in the kingdom of God, and drink of the rivers of his pleasures, they eat the bread of sorrows, and drink of the cup of God's eternal wrath, without any mixture; and, while others sing the song of *Moses* and the Lamb, these miserable creatures must howl and roar in everlasting despair.

How will it wreck the wretched soul, to think of its perishing for ever, though it had threatnings to awaken,

waken, promises to encourage it, and nothing to hinder it from flying to the blood of atonement, but its own perverse will! and O how terribly will it rage against itself, and resent its own folly! when it reflects for what it hath lost heaven and happiness for ever, even for a few momentary sordid delights.

When the damned spirits, especially such as perish under the gospel, shall reflect in themselves, how secure they were under the thundering threats of eternal fire; and how deaf to the loud calls and encouraging offers of the gospel; and how obstinately they refused life and happiness so freely offered: how will their consciences lash them, as with whips of steel, and fiery scorpions, for ever? Or when some of them shall bethink themselves on their own case, that they pretended to accept of Christ as a Saviour, but would not submit to him as a king; or when they shall reflect, that though they professed to submit to him as their Lord, yet they stuck at some darling lust, and so are eternally ruined for the sake of one sin. O what shrieks will this, and the like of this, make in hell! when, at every one of these bitter reflections, the worm of conscience shall give a deadly bite into the heart of their souls.

But again, when they shall call up in their minds, not only the time and seasons of grace that are now past, but also shall remember what eternity to come is, and how these miseries and agonies the soul now endureth, shall never have an end; and, when millions of ages are past, shall never be nearer an end; how confounding must such a thought be, and how quick and tormenting must be the reflection upon it? How will the soul turn a devil and a fury against itself, and execute God's wrath upon it, by its own stinging thoughts and despairing reflections?

O my soul, thou see'st from this, that 'tis a matter of eternal concern to die well. If, when the soul

is loosened from its body, it should slide into hell, there is no redemption from that pit of destruction for ever; and so the loss of the soul would be as irreparable as it is sad. To commit a mistake that can be again retrieved is not so fatal, because a bypast oversight may be amended by future care and diligence; but to miss in a step which can only be taken once, and which if we miss, we are finally and for ever undone; how fatal is this! and how doth it demand all the foresight, attention and diligence I can be master of, to prevent it? And now, since 'tis certain I can die but once, and this once dying determines my state for ever; for, *as the tree falleth so it lyeth; and as death leaves me, so judgment shall find me*: hence, through the grace of God, it shall be my greatest concern that lyes nearest my heart, how to die well.

And since there is no dying the death of the righteous, without living their life; it shall be my daily study, *to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with my God*. But, again, this cannot be attained, without repenting dally of sin, and mortifying of lusts and passions, nor without a constant application of Christ's blood and spirit, for pardon and holiness, and inquiring daily *Where is God my maker*, and living always in a humble stated subjection to his will in all things. For, can he be righteous who forgets God his owner, and lives as without him in the world? Or is he righteous who is a *lover of his pleasures more than of God*, and in the secret sense of his heart, is a *Worshipper of the creature more than the Creator*? Would it be a righteous thing, to harden my heart against God, and his fear and love, and to cross his will to do mine own? Or would it be a righteous thing, when the Son of God came into the world, and died to *redeem me from all iniquity, and that I might live to him who died and rose again,*

sin, if I should keep off from him, refuse his offers, and not submit to his laws?

Well then, if I would die the death of the righteous, and have my latter end in peace, I must be holy in the life of faith, fear, love, repentance, and obedience; and there must be strict watching over the loose, unsettled heart, that is ready to go astray from God, and to be intangled in sin. There must be humility, tenderness and circumspection, in the whole of my life and conversation: There must be a holy contempt of this world, in comparison of the next; and an undervaluing of all its enjoyments, in comparison of things unseen and eternal.

Blessed Lord, in dependence on thy grace, I'll endeavour all this. I'll make it my most earnest study to renounce every sin, exercise every grace, perform every duty, and practise every christian virtue; and I'll exercise myself to have always a conscience *void of offence towards God and towards man*, being willing in all things to live uprightly and honestly. There is no work nor invention in the grave, whether I am hasting; there is no state of trial again after death; no more any promise of mercy, nor offer of a Saviour: whatever is to be done for salvation must be done here; and therefore I fly unto Christ my Saviour, from the wrath to come, not knowing how I can be safe any other way. I'll apply his cleansing blood to purge my conscience from dead works, to serve the living God: for him would I fain serve, with the strongest bent of my heart, and the utmost extent of my power; and whatever my hand findeth to do, may I do it with all my might.

MEDITATION XVI.

Death to believers is the portal through which they pass into eternal life.

DEATH is the soul's passage to an eternity, either of misery or happiness, according, to the state and temper of the soul. If a soul be out of Christ, it dies in its sin, and the second death is finished upon it; but if it is vitally implanted in Christ, it carries in it the seeds of a blessed immortality, and death enters it into the full possession of eternal life.

Doth life consist in self-moving principles? these the believer carries along with him into the other world: for, as he hath an active spirit, no more clogged with dull and heavy matter, to the impairing of its vigour, or the checking of its activity; so this spirit is inwrought with such divine principles, as will be lively springs of pure and pleasant action; that is, there will be, in the other world, such a clear knowledge of God in Christ, and such a perfect love to him, and such a pleasing admiration of his divine excellencies, as will never cease to put on the soul, in an internal vigorous activity, in all heavenly employments and enjoyments.

Again, doth life consist in a consciousness of our enjoyments, and of the pleasures that attend our state? then, what perfect life shall be in heaven, when the soul, being set in the midst of beautifying objects, hath a perfect sense of its own happy condition, and finds nothing to interrupt it from viewing and reflecting with pleasure on the comforts of its state; and so it hugs itself in its own blessedness, saying eternally, *The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places, and I have a goodly heritage.*

There they have the flower, and grace, and beauty

of all excellency, and they are conscious they have them: and this will be an everlasting spring of pure and perfect joy. What raising and ravishing thoughts will they have, when they cast in their minds the time that is past, and the eternity to come! that time that is past they were often sinning and sighing, often in sorrows, in troubles, in sickness, in pain, in want, and in contempt. But now, through the eternity that is ever coming, they are saved with a perfect salvation from sin, and all that is in it; from sin, and all that follows upon it. The Lord, say they, hath made us now happy, according to our mind; yea, extended our happiness above what we could think, conceive or desire.

O happy day! when perfect faculties shall act to their uttermost on objects that are sufficient at once to entertain and enlarge them, and to supply them with fresh strength to act with an eternal vigour, that hath eternal delight in it, and with an eternal delight that hath an eternal vigour in it. O blessed life! where there is such an eternal reciprocation, as objects infinitely alluring, and faculties made ready for them; faculties perfected, and yet the objects so transcendent, as infinitely to surmount all their powers: this is life indeed! 'tis the true and proper notion of the soul's happy life! 'tis life in perfection: 'tis eternally so! the powers of the soul will be no more benumbed with a drowsy, unlistly body, nor its activity restrained with dull organs: but the soul having now its unconstrained liberty, it walks at large in its own proper element, and takes in all that is grateful and pleasing from every object; but especially and mainly terminating on the fulness of the Deity, as the same is exhibited and communicated in Christ. Here it can meet with nothing that can confine it, except the finiteness of its own capacity; and so it can take its fill of solace and joy for ever.

May

May this heavenly happiness never be out of my mind ! may my day thoughts and my night thoughts be possessed with the same. I have never such deep and solid satisfaction, as when my heart dwells on the glory to be revealed. But I sadly bemoan, that I suffer so often my delights in heavenly things to fade. Alas, how seldom do I long for heaven ! and how little, in comparison of what it should be, is my relish of its pure and sublime joys ! O that my heart were more purged, and prepared for its purity and sublimity, and more initiated in its joys ! that *forgetting the things that are behind, I may reach forward to the things that are before, and press towards the mark, even the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

MEDITATION XVII.

Death is the leaving of the body to be a lifeless lump of flesh.

THE soul, that gave life, power, sense and motion to the body, is gone : and hence the body becomes a dull, senseless carcase, which, tho' it hath eyes, it seeth not : and tho' it hath ears, it hears not : neither can it handle with its hands, nor breathe through its throat. Nor is there any carcase more loathsome, and ghastly to look on, than an human body, when 'tis under the hand of death. *Bury my dead out of my sight,* said *Abraham* of his beloved *Sarah*. Even those who have made the earth to tremble, and have caused their terror to be heard in the land of the living, yet by death *they are cast out as an abominable branch.* The body is God's curious workmanship, at the make of which there was consultation and solemnity : and it was made an organical instrument for the service of the soul ; and such

Such reverend marks of majesty upon it, from its wisdom, wisdom, erectness, mien and proportion, as that other creatures do obeisance to the same. But this body, how stately and beautiful soever it is, when death seizeth it, becomes a deformed and ghastly thing.

How foolish is it then, to shew the most care about what concerns only the body, and its necessities! Is a man taken up wholly or mainly with the riches, honours, and pleasures of this life? that day his breath goeth out, the comfort of all these things is gone, though the soul is held in their snares for ever.

O my soul, be not caught and intangled in bodily pleasures, which are so short lived, and at best salute thee but deceitfully: for, whilst thou embraces them, as *Joab* did to *Amasa*, they smite thee under the fifth rib. O my soul, be not puffed up with earthly honour and vain applauses: for this is a breath that will soon expire, and be extinguished, and leave thee, as *Abshalom's* mule did him, in thy greatest extremity. O my soul, be not inveigled with deceitful riches: for, besides that they stick thy mind full of cares, and pierce thy heart with many sorrows, thou know'st not but that this night death shall take them all from thee. Lay up then thy treasures in heaven, and provide thyself with durable riches and righteousness. O my soul, art thou at so much care about thy body, to adorn it, and render it agreeable, tho' 'tis a beauty that will soon be consumed in the grave: nay, rather seek and endeavour that thou thyself should be adorned with all the graces of the Spirit, and that thou mayst appear in the beauty of holiness from the womb of the morning. O trim and adorn thyself for a bright and glorious eternity; where thou shalt shine fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and glorious as an army with banners.

MEDITATION XVIII.

Death at length turns the body into its original dust.

THE body, as it ceaseth from business and action, so 'tis laid down in the dark and lonely grave, where *it saith unto corruption, thou art my father; and to the worms, thou art my sister and brother;* who prey upon it, till it comes to be shattered into pieces, and cannot be distinguished from the dirt under our feet. And so the first sentence is execute upon it, *Dust thou art, and unto dust thou must return. Like sheep they are laid in the grave, death shall feed on them,* till the whole frame be dissolved and broken into shivers. The body is a curious thing, and organically contrived; but yet 'tis a frail brittle house, which will soon moulder into pieces, and crumble into very dust.

Sure it is, that earth, or any thing of earth, cannot be a man's happiness: for it cannot be a happiness to the very body itself, which is of earth; else what should hinder its pleasure, when it is laid in the earth, hath its mouth full of earth, and itself wholly dissolved into earth? Much less can it be a happiness to the soul, which can as little be fed with earth as the body can be fed with thoughts.

Vain world entice me not. I must not, for thy sake, make a deviation from the way to eternal life and happiness. Would it not be a foolish bargain, to lose an incorruptible crown, for a fading flower? or, for dying pleasures, lose pure and durable joys? I will then, through the help of my Redeemer, with the greatest earnestness and contention, strive for the crown of life, and for the waters of life, and the bread of life.

Death

Death is shortly to lay my body down in the grave and crumble it into dust ; and where am I, and where will I find myself at last, if I have no part in the resurrection of the just ? My daily care it shall be then, *to know Christ, and the power of his resurrection*, raising my soul to a life that is active in the service of God, and to experience a *fellowship in his sufferings*, that as *Christ died for sin*, so sin shall no more live or have dominion in me ; but I'll endeavour to live to him who died for me, and by this means I shall attain a glorious resurrection from the dead.

M E D I T A T I O N XIX.

Death is a conflict and war with the human nature.

TIS a war with the body : it seeks its total destruction ; it grinds it into powder, and shrivels it into as small particles as the dust of the earth and would not have so much as one sheard of it to cleave to another.

Tho' the body should plead, that 'tis God's workmanship, curiously made ; that 'tis an admirable contexture with great variety, order and fitness of all its parts, to serve the purposes designed ; yet it cannot be heard by this inexorable enemy. But death attacks and overcomes the body, and lays it in ashes so that only the rubbish remains of once a stately and glorious fabric.

And as death is a warring with the body, so also with the soul. 'Tis true, it cannot separate or dissipate the parts, or dissolve the contexture of such an uncompounded substance, as the soul in man ; nor can it destroy any of its essential powers, nor extinguish its vital, self-moving principles ; it cannot annihilate

hilate its essence, nor hinder it to be always an intelligent, subsistent, and self-conscious being; but yet it dislodges the soul, it removes it, whether it will or not, from its dwelling; it suspends and cuts off all its vital influence upon its own body, and so hinders all these corporeal sensations, whereby the soul could make an advantage of its body, for tasting of the goodness of its beneficent Creator in sensible comforts; and it obliges the soul to bid adieu to all corporeal delights, tho' oftentimes it hath served itself of them, to minister an occasion of praising the great Creator of all things.

Hence death is a war against the whole man. 'Tis true, the soul subsists in life, and the matter of the body subsists in being; but the man is not, but ceases to be. He is no more that compound of soul and body called man: that union is dissolved. The carcass is no more an organized body; or the organs are shattered in pieces, or so out of tune, that the soul hath retired, being incapable of animating or directing such a mis-tuned instrument. And all that the man perceives now in himself is a soul; and he is wholly a soul, and no more that thing that walked to and fro upon earth. He hath taken a few turns on the stage of time, and now he hath vanished out of sight.

How comes this about? How can death, the weakest thing in nature, yea, which is weakness itself, be so powerful and prevailing, as to break down and demolish God's own work? It cannot certainly do ought, but as 'tis God's messenger, sent to overturn his own building. But how again can this be? Is it to be thought, that the all-wise and good God would take pleasure in distressing his poor creatures, or in destroying the work of his own hands, for destroying sake, or upon the meer accounts of his sovereignty? Some, of a desultory humour, may take a pleasure in

doing, and undoing again; but to think so of God, would be infinitely injurious to his wisdom and goodness. There must be then some great cause for such a total devastation as death makes in the world, which is so universal, as that it becomes as a new world every century: and what other reason can be found out, but that *by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin*. Sin corrupts and defiles the soul, and hence the body becomes an infected, rotten house: sin oppresses the soul with corrupt passions and lusts, and hereby the body is overwhelmed with a flood of discordant humours, which at length beat and break it into pieces.

See, my soul, what ill sin hath done in the world, what sad work it hath made; yea, what havock of the generation among whom thou hast lived. It dissolves and devours the body, and it would prey also on the vitals of the soul. Nor is there any way of preventing its eternally direful consequences, without killing its life, and breaking its power, and without being sanctified throughout in soul, spirit and body, whereby the soul is inlaid with such principles, as can make it, whether in the body or out of the body, to live unto God; and whereby the body, though laid in the melancholy grave, may be as seed there sown, which, tho' it ly for a while under the clod, yet it riseth again a glorious body at the resurrection from the dead.

MEDITATION XX.

There is in Man a natural Reluctancy to dying.

THE compound being called man, is naturally reluctant to dying; for besides a natural aversion he hath to the dissolution of himself, and the separation of his essential parts; and besides, that he is much accustomed to perceive objects by the sense,

and knows not well the way of living, he shall have, when left, a naked soul: besides all this, he is linked in several relations to others with whom he is conversant; so that when a motion is made to him of removing into the other world, he is ready to answer as the *Shunamite* woman did to the prophet, *I dwell among mine own people, and find myself very well, and I need not seek any change.*

The body, were it capable of pleading for itself, would declare against death, as being the undoing of it, and would utter itself in such a melancholy tone as this, *am I to go down to the mansions of death, to these dark territories, where the light of the sun, moon and stars, shine no more at all on me, nor the voice of joy and gladness is heard any more! Am I to enter into these gloomy regions, where the light of the sun goes down, and the stars set on me for ever? How dismal is such an apprehension? Am I in that dark interval of separation from my soul, to dwell in the den of rottenness, in the corruption of a loathsome grave? I shrink at the thoughts of this! what am I when forsaken of my soul, but a vile carcase, overspread with corruption, and over run with crawling worms? The very prospect of this dark and gloomy day, when the man's beauty is consumed from his dwelling, is as a veil or cloud darkning all terrestrial glory; especially, if no spiritual change is made on the body by the spirit of regeneration, and so no hope left of a body more glorious than what was laid down in the grave.*

Yes, the soul itself is reluctant to death. Though the soul can live and be happy too without it is body, so that it is not so much the soul that needs the body, as the body that needs the soul; yet as the soul is created with an aptitude to enliven and rule its body, so it has a propensity to the same: 'tis endued with love

to its own portion of matter, and this makes it willing to think of parting. But, O my soul, art thou not more related to the Lord, thy portion, thy happiness, thy very life, than the body, which is only as a movable tent, where thou dwells only for a season? And should thou not be more engaged to the Lord, who hath loved thee, bought thee, redeemed thee, and washed thee in his blood, and *makes thee meet for the inheritance of the saints in light*; and at length raises thee to the same? Dost thou not, I say, stand more engaged to him, than to the body, that clogs and inveigles thee, and keeps a body of sin and death close hanging upon thee, and oppressing thy spirit? Art thou not more obliged to the Lord for thy fitness, right and title to eternal life, an eternal crown and eternal joy, and the lively hope of the same, than thou art to thy body, for its mean enjoyments and sordid delights?

Let it then be the intimate sense of thy heart, that thou art rather for the Lord than for the body: and that whatever hankering thou hast to thy body, that yet *to be with Christ is far better.*

Dost thou regret, that by death thou art parting from thy near and dear friends? But what thinkest thou of the friends on the other side of death? where there are *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*; where there are the patriarchs, prophets, apostles and martyrs; where there are all the holy men, and Christian relations and acquaintances that are gone before us; and where especially there is Christ, the best friend and lover of souls. Death gathers believers, not into the congregation of the dead, but to the congregation of the living; and it brings them to their own people, a people more their own, than any they have left behind. For they are then *come to the general assembly of the first-born, to an innumerable company of angels, to the spirits of just men made*

perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, to whom we are most related of all.

True it is, that in the best there is a natural love of life; and this is implanted in man for great and noble purposes. 'Tis for the trial and exercise of several graces. If there were not a natural reluctance to suffering, the Christian's faith would have little trial: his patience would have little to bear, his fortitude would have little to overcome, nor would there be any glory in martyrdom. But yet when the gracious soul takes a full view of the case, when he bethinks himself, that death, as 'tis a freeing him from the body of this flesh, so also 'tis a delivering him from the body of sin, and that 'tis an admitting him where he shall be with the Lord, see the king's face, and enjoy his immediate presence for ever: he is willing to die to attain the same.

MEDITATION XXI.

Death is unavoidable.

WE must as surely die as we are born: 'Tis appointed for all men once to die, and the sentence is irreverfible, fo that there is no difcharge of this war. In other wars foldiers may be difmiffed, or they may make efcape by flight, or they may make a treaty of peace, or they may furrender themfelves without ftroke of fword. But there is no way to evade the fatal conflict between nature and death. No capitulation can be made with death. No terms can be offered unto it, either to delay its time, or mitigate its agony, and far lefs to ward off its blows. Neither yielding to its demands, nor refifting its ftrokes, can hinder its taking effect, or prevent its violent attacks.

If in this life only we had hope, might not man be

said to be made in vain, or that he has a life scarce worth the living. Here either some empty hope deceives us, or some anxious care vexes us, or some fear stifles the spirit, or some grief fobs the heart, or some labour toils the bones, or some languor wastes the flesh, or some passion inflames the blood. And when all things of that kind are deduced from the true enjoyment of life, how small is the remains! Is there any at all, which is not every now and then interrupted, either with the attacks or the alarms of death, or with damping pre-apprehensions of the same?

But sure we are, the Lord hath not made all men in vain; since verily *there is a reward for the righteous*, and verily *there is a God that judgeth uprightly*. Tho' man then be set down in this lower world, with a cloud of mortality hanging over his head, yet he is a candidate for other regions, even the regions of eternal light, life and bless. He is planted in this world in order to be transplanted into the next. O blessed be thy name, O Lord, that thou hast placed a spirit in man, and by thy inspiration hast given him understanding in things unseen and eternal. Yea, thou hast given to thy chosen ones such a bent and strength of spirit, as that they can arise, ascend and put on glory. And the most sublime spirits aspiring most God wards, cannot be most deluded.

O my soul, let the thoughts of this revive and comfort thee under all the melancholy views of death. Confine not thy mind to death, but look beyond it to those high regions where no mortality can approach. By faith pierce through the interpoling veil, and get not only a foresight, but even a foretaste of the good things of *Inmanuel's* land, and study every day to get thy heart more and more purged and prepared for such pure and glorious regions.

MEDITATION XXII.

Death is irresistible.

AS none can avoid death's strokes, so neither can any resist its power. Like the battering of a city, it first weakens and breaks down the out-works, such as the limbs and outward senses, and next it attacks the vitals: and man hath not power, either to hinder or bear up under its fatal strokes.

The brawny legs that were as pillars of brass, and which strutted and tossed up and down, like big gamesters, now begin to tremble and fail. The sinewy arms, that were so proud, as if they could remove mountains, now shake, to shew their strength is gone. The hands, that gript hard at the world, now can retain nothing, but part with their grip of friends, riches, food, and every thing worldly. The head that towered high, as if it could reach the skies, now bows down or falls aside, as a sign of its yielding unto death's power, and that it cannot make head against it. The nerves, that were so strong and tough, that the man thought such cords could scarce be broken, yet now shrink at the touch of death's hand, and acknowledge, that it hath in its power to fret them to pieces. The tongue that talked big, spoke boldly and gloried in vanity, now falters and loses its speech. And the quivering lips cannot help it, but naturally own they may not speak a word against the commission of death, but submit with silence unto its prevailing power. The eyes that either overlooked, or looked disdainfully on their fellow-creatures, find now a darkness covering them, and the shadows of death sitting down on them, and they turn ghastly to look on. The beautiful rose of blood retires now from the cheeks, as not being able to look grim death

Death is the face, and pale they grow, like death sitting on a pale horse. And the heart that was swelled with pride and ambition, and puffed up with vain conceit, now akes, groans, pants, fails, breaks, dies!

How low is man brought by his iniquity! *The wise man dies, and likewise the fool.* Vain man, be not puffed up with any thing that relates to the body, since death will soon stain the glory of thy pride; it will bring thee down, and lay thine honour in the dust. Abide if thou canst in thine honour and glory, and maintain it against the humbling power of death. But this thou knowest to be a vain attempt; for *when thou diest, thou shalt carry nothing away, neither shall thy glory descend after thee.*

Submit, O my soul, freely to death's sentence, and willingly yield to its strokes. Let it be with thine own consent to go out of thy body, when thy Lord calls for thee. Why shouldst thou struggle, where thou hast not power to resist? Be content to retire from thy body, and drop it, whatever shocks thy composition may suffer by it, that so thou may comply with the will of thy Lord, and be for ever with him, and under his immediate care and direction. Father of spirits, I am more sibi to thee than to my body; and in all humility I desire to bow unto thy will, both as to the time and manner of my dying. *Thou prevails over man for ever,* and I yield to thy rightful, supreme and benign authority; and all, I am sure, will be well again, if I be enabled by faith and patience to inherit thy promises.

Yea, I think I hear some warm devout souls saying, they are not only content to die, but they find it as a matter of joy, that at length they shall part from these bodies that have been such a burden and cumber to them all their days in the flesh: and that such is their hearty hatred of sin, that they are even well pleased to be as it were revenged upon their bodies,

which have occasioned all the evil concupiscence that hath kept them in constant conflict and warfare while here in the world. And such also is their veneration of the holiness, justice and veracity of God, and their zeal for his glory, that they are contented to be denied, even of a part of themselves for a while, for the vindication of his honour.

MEDITATION XXIII.

Death is inexorable.

AS no strength can prevent or resist its stroke, so no intreaty can stay its hand when its set time is come. All men are sensible, that death cannot, in the end, be avoided; nor its power repelled; and hence they lay their account for dying at last. But then they would have it not to make haste, but to linger much in the way; for several reasons, some of which are of a better, and some of a worse sort. They are ready to cry, O death, delay, come not yet, stay thy hand for so long a time. But death is deaf and inexorable to all their intreaties.

Some have contracted a great fondness for this earth, and hence they are loth to remove. They are so pleased with the accommodations of this inn they lodge in only for a night, that they are ready to say, 'tis good to be here. They are so amused with the varieties and entertainments in the way, that they forget their home. But lingring soul, death is before thee, and hastens to meet thee, and will not wait thy pleasure; but shortly it will close thine eyes upon this earth, and all thou art fond of in it.

Others have some great worldly prospect in hand, perhaps just between the winning or losing, and they fear it may misgive, unless they live to conduct it. Hence they are ready to say, O death, delay a while longer

onger, and make no great haste, if thou art coming
et it be with a slow pace. But poor worldling, 'tis
God's messenger, and receives not its commands from
thee: yea, 'tis never more ready to strike, than when
the man hath a long formed project just ripe for ex-
ecution. I think I have read somewhere of an obser-
vation of Mr *Baxter's*, that death never more usual-
ly seizeth a person, than when he is about to execute
what he imagined to be his last worldly project. 'Tis
probable the observation might be founded on the
parable of the rich man, who, when he had promised
rest to himself, upon building and filling his barns,
had his soul taken from him that very night. How-
ever it is, the like may be often observed in the course
of divine providence.

Others having children would fain live longer on
earth, and yet a while longer again, and so on end-
lessly, to see how their posterity shall be provided for,
and how disposed of in the world. But this cannot
flave off death, nor delay its coming. But thou must
leave this to God, whose proper work it is to provide
for futurities. And hast thou not found him a pro-
viding God for thyself? And why should not this
matter be left and reserved to him with respect to thy
children? Hast thou not matters of great concern to
think on, and which is more thy proper business to
mind, and that is, how thy soul shall be prepared for
eternity, and provided of a blessedness therein?

Others apprehend, they are in a state of some ser-
viceableness for the glory of God and the honour of
our Mediator, and are loath to want such opportu-
nity of doing good. But neither can this hold off
death's hand, or keep off its strokes. The Lord needs
not thee, or the like of thee. He can easily do his
work without thee; nor shall the earth be forsaken
tho' thou be taken from it. And now when the ser-
vice of thy service is expired, and thou hast accom-
plished

plished thy work and day as an hireling, thou must be dismissed; and if thy heart be so bent for service, thou shalt not want service of a more noble kind in heaven.

Others again are unwilling to die, and pray, O death! stay for a while; because they want assurance. They are for more time as well as more grace to use all diligence to make their calling and election sure. Or, tho' they have some good hope of heaven, yet not such as excludes all fear. And this makes them uneasy at the thoughts of death, because they find they are in suspense, or at least have not such a full satisfaction as they would be at, with reference to their eternal state. They are not unwilling to die, that they may enjoy the presence of their Lord, but they are unwilling to die, till they be sure of enjoying the same. But even in this case many have death standing inexorably before them, and grapple with it, when they have only the satisfaction there is in adherence to the Lord, and recumbency on him, without the certainty of evidence. The Lord will have thee corrected for thy backwardness to duty, and slothfulness in it, or for thy strong and frequent workings of pride after duty, or for the letting down of thy spiritual watch, or for thy not setting a due esteem on the comforts of his Spirit; or he will have thy faith to be tried, whether against hope thou canst believe in hope; or he has a mind to surprize thee with heaven, by suffering thee to enter into the lists with death, even then when thou art not absolutely sure of victory.

Since no entreaties can be heard to hinder or stay death's attacks, and which, for ought any knows, may be sudden and surprizing; it ought to be my principal care to prepare daily for the same. And, for this end, I should live as retiredly and abstractly from the body, and as much above it as I can. For,
let

Let a man plead as he will, his interest and concern in his body, it will not hinder death to execute its commission.

Should he plead, that he is sub to his body, that it is an essential part of him; yet this cannot detain his soul within him. His spirit is under a superior command, and has other ends to answer, than to enliven dull and heavy flesh; and go it must, out of its body when the Lord by the message of death sends it away. Or, should he plead long acquaintance with his body, that his soul has long inhabited the same, which when it leaves, the earthly tabernacle crumbles into dust. Yet neither can this be heard, but go the soul must, and take its fate, with spirits good or bad, according to his state. Or, should he plead a long possession, that he hath for a long time used his body, and hath been accustomed to perceive by its senses; and hence he knows not how to live, or in what regions to dwell without it. But neither can this keep off death or stay its hand: but the soul must leave its body, and enter into another way of living than ever it was acquaint with. Or if he should have yet a more ignoble and base reason for his unwillingness to die, and so plead his great affection to his body, that it has always been the darling and dearly beloved of his soul, on which he hath bestowed all his time and care; and hence he thinks he is undone without it; yet neither can this prevail, but when the commandment goeth forth upon thee, go thou must, tho' spoiled of thy body, and of all thou can delight in, and tho' thou can find nothing in eternity that can content thee for ever. Or, which is as bad, should one plead the great advantage and benefit he had by his body, the many gratifications of his corporeal senses, and which, when he is stript of, he knows not what can be left behind, or what there is that can answer his sick appetite. Yet this cannot persuade death unto

unto a delay, but come it will, and rent his soul from his body, and send it away, tho' it sees nothing where 'tis going to, but an empty chaos, destitute of all manner of provisions, that either carnal souls or bodies can live on.

I see then, that any undue attachment to the body, or the world, or to any thing that concerns them, by making us unwilling to die, makes death more painful, while it cannot in the least retard its approach, It shall therefore be my study to live as much above the world, and to wean myself from all corporeal and earthly delights as I can. Who could ever by his love of bodily life procure it to be perpetual? Can any thing be more disconsolate, than for a man to have all his good bound up in that which he cannot keep; yea, which he is certain he must lose for ever?

But if I accept of God to be my God for ever and ever, and enter into covenant with him, and become his, his without reserve and without revocation; then this God will be my guide unto death, and thro' death, and also my portion for ever. And since death cannot break the bonds of this covenant, then thro' eternity I will live unto him, who is not the God of the dead but of the living.

Or if through faith, humility and prayer, I attain to a vital union with Christ, who is the life of the soul; death, tho' it breaks the union between soul and body, cannot dissolve the soul's union with Christ. For neither death nor life can separate between Christ and the soul that is ingrafted in him. 'Tis only looseable enjoyments that death deprives the soul of, but vital communication from Christ is none of them. Since for a believer to die, tho' 'tis to be absent from the body, yet 'tis to be present with the Lord. Death to him is not only a going, or a being gathered unto his people, but 'tis the returning of his spirit unto God, and

and a departing to be with Christ. 'Tis not only a gathering unto his fathers according to the flesh, but a gathering unto the father of spirits, that he may live. To die in extinction were enough indeed to cause an insuperable aversion to dying, much more to die in order to an eternal dying; but to die in order only to live, to die out a miserable life, in order to an eternally happy life, to die as a grain of wheat, in order to rise up in greater beauty and usefulness: what harm is there in this? Or what is there in it to cause any terror or aversion?

MEDITATION XXIV.

No man's soul can retire from its body, or command itself away at Pleasure.

ONE would think, that the soul has as many avenues to go out at, when it will, as there are pores in the body; or rather that such a penetrable substance, as the spirit in man, might pierce through any part of matter it pleases, and be gone when it has a mind: but 'tis not so. If the body be in a due temperament, the soul must stay in it; and, while 'tis moving the whole body, it cannot so disintangle itself from the same, as move or retire an inch from it: nor, on the other hand, if the body lose its due temper, can the soul stay a moment longer in it.

The uniting, and again the separating of the soul and body, are both wholly in the hands of God, whose right alone it is to determine every man's lot and estate, both in this world and the next. 'Tis he that presides over our lives, and 'tis he that determines our death in all its circumstances: and 'tis he that distributes to every one either sorrows or joys in the other world, according to their condition and behaviour in this. When to come into this world, and when to go out of it again, is not for

us to determine; but it belongs to him who hath power of life and death, and is the governor both of the seen and unseen world.

I see from this, that my spirit depends, and that in a very immediate manner, only upon God. Bodies depend in part upon one another, and are preserved and supported in their very forms by their mutual conjunction, tho' ultimately they depend upon their former. But spirits have no other support but God their father: nor can any thing supply and refresh them, but his breath and fulness. When he commands a spirit to stay in a body, it stays; and when he commands it to go, it goes. The strongest ligaments cannot tie down the spirit to its body, when as by a manumission, 'tis sent away by the father of Spirits. And the utmost force, and vigorous exertment of the soul, cannot distance it one hair-breadth from its body, till God give it leave to depart.

And as this shews the noble excellency of the spirit in us, in having such a support and stay as the self-original and self-subsistent mind, who is the everlasting father, and rock of ages; so it shews the absolute necessity of a daily owned and unfeigned dependence on him for our all.

O let me think on this with an awful becoming reverence! let me always bear in mind, that whatever it is in the world that suits the body, and answers its exigencies, that yet 'tis only the father of spirits that can be the stay, portion and happiness of souls. And may I, in this view, turn all the powers of my soul upon him, and count that I can be satisfied only with his likeness.

MEDITATION XXV.

Tis well and wisely ordered that God hath kept it wholly in his own hands, how long to retain our spirits within us, and when to dismiss or remove the same.

TIS a matter of greater importance than to be left in our hands, how long to keep our spirits within us, and when to send them away. If man had it in his own power when to retain, and when to dismiss his spirit; this would not answer the ends of divine providence, in planting us in this world. For some would command their spirits away, before they had accomplished their days as a hireling; or before they had answered the design of God's providence, in placing a spirit within them. And others again would retain their spirits, and refuse to let them go tho' they have finished their work, and God has no more to do with them in time. When would these give up their spirits, if the matter were left to their wills, that never discerned or tasted any thing that's spiritual and divine? Or when would these resign their souls, that never used them to any other purpose, but to be as salt to keep their bodies, from dissolving into corruption and putrefaction? Or when would any of these be willing to quit their souls, who both dread hell and hate heaven, and count no sight so pleasant as that of the sun! or that think, when they are stripped of their bodies, they are left stark naked, and that nothing either satisfying or real is left behind, for their entertainment and joy: when, I say, would any of these be willing to part with their souls, or to send them away from their bodies, if it were left to their power to make a choice?

If this matter were in our hands, to retain or let

go our souls at pleasure, then some to a fit of im-
 patience and discontent might rid the body of their
 spirits, who yet, by being longer held in them, may
 come afterwards to be very useful in their day, and
 serve God and men with cheerful, contented minds.
 Yea, even the goodly themselves, through a heavy
 cloud of melancholy, pressing down their minds, or
 through the weighty pressure of many evils, or com-
 passing them about, or through an impatient desire
 and expectation of the glory to be revealed, might
 either in a paroxysm of temptation, or in a trans-
 port of zeal, command their spirits away: when yet
 it may serve for excellent purposes, to keep their
 souls still in their bodies a while longer; and also to
 exercise them, while in the body, in hard conflict
 with sore temptation and heavy troubles, yea, to
 both for the trying, purging and purifying of them-
 selves, and also for the counselling and comforting and
 comfort of others in their tribulations. But the
 other hand, when would the yielding ordinance
 would the person that lives in ease and prosperity
 think it time to begone and remove from this earth?
 And would not all the wicked and impenitent
 foolishly and rashly let their souls go, when they can find
 nothing behind death, but dark regions, frightful
 devils, and the horrible flashes of hell-fire? They
 would all stay in their bodies, that they might con-
 plain their souls, when God sees they have still
 ready filled up the measure of their iniquity, and
 that is now time to drive them away now to exhor-
 tation. If the matter were left in our hands, no
 doubt we might as well as a plague, when it is
 fitted and offered, would the same be a plague
 and profession of such use to the church as it
 fit, that such persons and afflicted souls live, that
 they may be trained up in the way of holiness,
 that is to say, that by such means, this religion to
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the divine will, contempt of the world and heavenly mindedness, they may be qualified for divine services here, and heavenly enjoyments hereafter. And, on the other hand, 'tis congruous to the divine wisdom, goodness and holiness, that the prosperous should die, to put an end to prosperous wickedness, to stain the pride and glory of man, to check a foolish confidence and an inordinate complacency in the world, and to warn others of its vanity, and convince them of its uncertainty.

O blessed Lord, since thou hast kept the disposal of our spirits in thine own hand, how long to keep them in their fleshly tabernacle, and when to dislodge them; and since thou hast an unquestionable power and right to do so, I desire to yield this matter wholly to thee. I desire to be willing to quit my spirit, and let it go, when thou calls it forth, and freely to give it up to thy hands.

These indeed that are unwilling to part with their sins, and do not close with Christ as their prince and Saviour, or do not make a surrender of themselves unto him, when at death their souls are taken from them, they cling about their spirits, and would hold them in their bodies, as with both hands: but their grips are too weak; for, notwithstanding all their attempts, their souls are rent from them. And tho' they shew great untowardness and reluctance, yea a sullen refusal to part with their souls, yet they are driven away in their wickedness, driven out of their bodies, driven out of sight to darkness, and chased out of the world. The man had not made God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness; and now God destroys him for ever, takes him away, plucks him from his dwelling place, and roots him out of the land of the living.

But where there is a willingness to obey the summons

mons given; where there is a calm resignation and filial submission to the will of God; where there is a willingness in the spirit to follow Christ, wherever he leads and carries it; where there is a free and full depositing of the soul in his hand, as a sure hand that may well be trusted with what we commit to him; O the sweet composure, joy and transport of this!

If a man thinks to resist and make head against death, and shews nothing but aversion and ill-will to its sentence, he feels the blows thereof more smartly; he finds himself forced to yield, and so he finds all the troubles and pain there is in a fruitless resistance, and in despairing of being match for it; and all this besides the frightful prospect of its terrible consequences, when death executes its commission, and cuts short its work in righteousness.

On the other hand, when a person has nothing to do but ly down and die; when he dies with his own consent, and is willing to lay down his head under death's strokes, not for its own sake, but because 'tis God's messenger sent upon his errand, and fulfilling his good pleasure; then death deals with a more soft and gentle hand. A placid calm resignation blunts the sharpness of its weapons; especially when 'tis heightned with the believing views of the lightsome shore of eternity, where death carries the believer. O the unspeakable peace and joy there is in humble submission, calm resignation, quieting patience, and the pleasant refreshing hope of glory!

Blessed Lord, *my times are wholly in thy hand*, and I am pleased with the thought, that as thou presidest over my life, so also over my death. I am content (if I mistake not mine own heart) of any state, whether of poverty, want or contempt in the world, if I can be enabled to serve thee in the same; and of sickness or pain, if I can honour thee by the same;

of any other trouble, if it purge away sin, and fit
 e for heaven's purity and glory. I have experien-
 ed too much of the vanity of this world, to make
 e fond, or even desirous, of beginning a life in it
 e second time. I beg above all things thy grace to
 ust me, *to wait all the days of my life till my
 change come.* And how relieving is it to think, that
 is the God and father of spirits that calls forth our
 irts at death, who knows well what to do with
 hem, and how to dispose of them to the best advan-
 age; and that 'tis Christ who requires them whole
 hey are, since he hath bought them, and told down
 he price, and that he has his own great kind purpo-
 es to serve by them! *Into thy hands, O Lord, I com-
 mit my spirit.*

M E D I T A T I O N XXVI.

*No age or Condition of Men can exempt them
 from Death.*

MAN that is born of a woman is of few days and
 full of trouble. How short is our abode in this
 earth! and how quickly will we be gone! 'Tis but
 a little time to our mortal sickness. There is no part
 of our body but what may be affected with trouble,
 and no pore in it but what may let in some disease.
 Shortly our vital powers shall give up their office.
 The pulse shall cease, and the soul shall take its silent
 and undiscerned flight into the other world. Nor
 can any age, or strength, or any circumstances in the
 world, keep off death, or secure any person from its
 attacks even for one moment.

Old people, they must die. And may it not con-
 vince them of this, when they see that all the gene-
 rations before them have disappeared and vanished
 off the stage of this life; and when they find sensibly
 that they are not so lively and vigorous as when they

were young? And why, but that death is already gaining some ground, and getting some footing in them, which will prevail more and more, till it part soul and body, and lay one of them as low as the dust. Do not you find your bodies already stooping and bowing down to the earth? And why but to yield unto the sentence, *that dust must return to its dust again.*

The young die. Yea there are many scores that die young, for one that comes to ripe old age. Many are crop'd in the very bud. They are like *Jonah's gourd*, which many a time a worm smites and withers unto death.

The strong and vigorous die. Some die in their full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. They die, tho' *their breasts are full of milk, and their bones moistened with marrow.* They are summoned to die, when they least looked for it, when they were most likely to live, and when they have the least fear of dying. When there appears not the least symptom of death, nor any decay in nature, proclaiming the returning of the body unto its dust, they are suddenly taken with a disease and die. The man was in his spring and prime, and he is cut off as a flower and fading.

Those of a middle age die. 'Tis but few among mankind that come up to threescore years and ten, the most part are cut off in the midst of their days, and in the midst of their projects too; like sheep they are laid in the grave, and death shall feed on them.

The rich die. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to the grave. Rich and poor ly down alike in the dust, and the worms do cover them. *Tho' they heap silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay, the just shall put it on.*

The great and honourable die. Death prevails on them, and changeth their countenance, and sendeth them

born away, and his sons came to honour, and he groweth it not. Fools and wise men die. Death kills the foolish, and slays the silly one; and the wise man dies as well as the fool. So that none are exempted from the necessity of dying. The rich glutton died; poor Lazarus died; kings are laid in their graves. It has taken away commanders on the head of armies. Wise men die as well as the ignorant. Abraham, the father of the faithful, and all the patriarchs died. Riches cannot bribe death. Worldly grandeur and majesty cannot dash it out of countenance. Might and power cannot affright it and chase it away. Eloquence cannot dissuade it from approaching. Poverty cannot starve it, nor can piety turn it away.

As this is a point that needs more to be minded than known, for 'tis not so much ignorance as inadvertence, that is the cause 'tis so little improved; so I wish that every one may think this meditation over again.

Art thou well advanced in old age? I say, thou must die, and your day of death draweth very near. One would think that as men find their lives waste, they should think the more of dying, as feeling themselves on the very borders of eternity. But do not we see that 'tis quite otherwise; they are never so old, but they think they may live another year, and again another year, and so on endlessly, till death steals them off their feet, and hurries them away. These that have first accustomed themselves to think that death is far off, can scarce, even when old age overtakes them, think it to be near at hand. And when they have been used to think upon it without any concern, often the more they are overgrown with age, they are the farther from any serious thought thereof. And hence they are as busy about this world, and the things therein, as if they were

to begin their days again, or live *Methuselah's* years; or rather, as it appears by their greater care for temporals than eternals, as they were never to die. But old man, thou must die, and death is making a fast approach, yea 'tis already working in your members, drying up the marrow, enfeebling the strength, dimming the sight, and bowing down the back. Thy sun then draws low; thy glass is almost run; thou art on the brink of eternity. The wrinkles of thy face, the paleness of thy cheeks, and the dimness of thine eyes, tell thee, thy sun, light, moon and stars are darkning. The constant vicissitude of thy rheums, defluations, infirmities and diseases, so close upon one another, as that the clouds return not after the rain, but one begins where another hath ended; tell thee, that death is already invading, and in possession of thy territories. When the hands, arms and legs, these keepers of the house, tremble with paralytic motions; thou may see from this, that thou art already succumbing under death's heavy hand. When the teeth that were the grinders of thy food, to make it fit for concoction, either cease to be, or are unfit for their office; this tells thee thou cannot uphold thy body much longer to sustain the attacks of death. An obstruction in the reins, a contraction or relaxation of the nerves, a concussion in the brain, or a suffocation in the heart, shows that the silver cord is loosing, the golden bowl is breaking, and that the pitcher is breaking at the fountain, and the wheel at the cistern. Such a decay of all the natural and vital powers, either in old or younger, tells them that they are near their long home, where *the dust returns unto the dust, and the spirit unto God that gave it*. Is thy main care about this world? Shortly thou shalt be out of it, and though earth hath got into thy mind, death shall close thine eyes upon it, and all its enjoyments.

Art thou young? Many as young as you die, yea, there

There be few that die old, in comparison of those that die young. How could the young think so much of this world, and so little of eternity, if death were minded; or how can they so seldom think of dying, if they consider themselves as mortals? Why would they not live to purpose, that they might die for happiness, if this were laid to heart? Should they not remember that they may die, as well as many other young ones have died, and daily die before them; and so live, as to die in the Lord, and for ever live with him? If you flatter yourselves with the prospect of a long life, what can it arise from, but from a fondness for life, and a partiality to yourselves, which deceives you into an opinion, that you shall live as long as the oldest. But how can ye promise to yourselves, that ye shall escape these diseases and fatal accidents, that hath snatched away thousands in the bud and blossom of their youth? 'Tis likely enough, that the young you see dying before your eyes, might have the same fond expectations of living long; but their hopes have deceived them, and so may yours, and so will yours as to a great many of you. *Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know, that for all these things God will bring thee, thou knowest not how soon, into judgment.*

Art thou strong and healthful? Many such die, These that are strong and vigorous, are ready to dream of an eternity in time, or of an immortal state in a mortal condition; they are not sensible of any failing in themselves, and cannot find how they should fail. But as strong as you have been laid low by death; and how know you, but that some disease is already breeding in thy body, which will soon make an end of thee? When death once fastens on you, all your strength cannot loose its grip, nor deliver you

from going down into the house of rottenness: but when there give a check to the least insinuating worm. As healthy as ye can pretend to be, have soon been brought to a languishing condition. We have sinful souls within us, that lets in death as a thousand doors, and we have corrupt bodies, liable to a thousand maladies: and the ways that death takes to invade us, are so infinite, and so unforeseen, that no man's strength can give him a security against the prevailing power of this king of terrors. Yea, when we consider how small and weak many of the vessels of life are, it may rather be wondered, that such a frail and nice machine, as these bodies are, should endure so long, than that they should decay so soon. And for ought the strongest man can know, it may be but a short time between this moment of his life, and the digging of his grave. Dost thou find thy body growing upon thy mind, and possessing all thy thoughts? Shortly thou shalt have no body. Or, art thou drenched in sensual delights? thou shalt soon be a naked soul. 'Tis possible indeed thou mayest reach threescore years and ten, or fourscore, because some have done so: but 'tis more probable thou shalt not, because there are a hundred that have come short of the same, for one that hath attained in.

Art thou come up to a middle age? Many in that age die. 'Tis such as are in the middle age, that for the most part, lay vast designs for a long suzerainty. But as the best half of our lives is irrecoverably past and gone, so your day of death is fast coming, and it may be is hard at hand. Behold the judge standeth at the door! Is your main plot and care about the earth, and the things thereof? Shortly your place shall know you no more, but ye shall be plucked from your dwelling, and chased out of the world. Are ye saying, who will shew us any visible sensible good? Shortly ye shall vanish out of this

visible world, where thou shalt not see the sun, moon, or stars, nor any good that's to be had under the sun? Is thy heart lifted up with the things of time? Shortly thou shalt be lodged in eternity, where the fashion of this world shall be over with thee, and time shall be no longer. Is all thy concern about thy body? Shortly it shall lay unto corruption, thou art my father, and to the worms, thou art my sister and brother.

Art thou rich and great in the world? Yet notwithstanding thou must die, and leave this world and all its pageantry and glory. The rich man often conceives and entertains such vast projects in his head, as no man's life, yea, not an age can finish and accomplish. By all which it appears, that either he little minds that he must die, or he is for removing death a great many stages beyond its time. But, *he* he trusts in his wealth, and boasts of the multitude of his riches, yet he cannot by them obtain that *he* should live for ever, and not see corruption: and when he dieth, he shall carry nothing away, but he shall go, go emptied of all his wealth, to the generation of his fathers, and shall never see the light. Art thou great and rich in the world? As thy authority cannot slave off death, neither can thy riches offer anything to stay its hands. Dives's riches could not buy off death, nor redeem him from hell, nor purchase a cup of cold water to cool him in these flames. Foolish man, that attempts by a handful of earth to fill up the room of God: unthinking beast, that imagines a reasonable immortal soul can be made happy in that, from which he will be eternally plucked away! make what appointments you will with the world, death will soon break the tryst.

Art thou a wise man in the world? Yet thou must to the grave, and ly with the kings and counsellors of the earth. One would think, that the men who

are so wise in their earthly affairs, and who make it their whole study to thrive and prosper in this world, that either they had found some substantial good in it, or at least had fallen upon the knack, of securing to themselves a perpetuity of what engrosses all their time, care, and thought. But do not we see it otherwise? As death cannot be bribed with riches; so as little can it be outwitted with craft, or persuaded by rhetoric, to stay its hand. *Wise men die likewise the fools, and leave their wealth to others; and though their inward thought is, that their house shall continue for ever, and their dwelling place to all generations; yet man being in honour, abideth not, but is like the beasts that perish.* And tho' this their way is their folly, yet their posterity approve their sayings. O unhallowed, O infatuated wit! that provides only for the things of time, and neglects the great concerns of eternity. O prodigious folly! that when there is an eternity before us, and when this life is designed as a preparation for the same, never to have a thought of it, till death draw the curtain, and enter the soul into an eternity of misery!

MEDITATION XXVII.

*There is a Divine Art in numbering our Days
that few attain unto.*

Mankind generally miscount their time. The most part reckon upon living to the utmost period of human life; that is, that they shall see threescore years and ten, or fourscore. The fallacy of which computation may be easily found out by this observation: let a man turn his eyes round him, either in the place he lives, or in any country he is in, he shall see but few left to die at that age.

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The most part again count, that the common measure of human life is a much longer duration than really it is: after they have promised themselves a life of seventy or eighty years, they look upon this as a very long succession of time, and a vast continuance in the world: when yet really it is not. And the surest way to be convinced and made sensible of this, is not to look forward to the time we have no experience of, but to look backward to the time that is past, and of which we have had an actual distinct perception: and here let us reflect how quickly are thirty, forty, or fifty years gone; how suddenly they are past away, like a dream. And may we not be sure, that any thing that remains shall pass as swiftly, and be as short?

Some number the same years twice over. They reckon it as time future that is past; that is, they count upon living threescore and ten years, or fourscore, without considering, that perhaps the best half, and which is also the most improveable part of them, is already gone. What a cheat is this, that men put upon themselves? They have accustomed themselves to think, that seventy or eighty years is a very long tract of time, and have swelled their mind with a big idea of the same; and they still fix this idea to the short remains of a life that is already much worn out, or has seen thirty, forty, fifty, or perhaps sixty of these years already past; and so thirty, twenty, or perhaps only ten years are counted and promised as much upon, as if they were four score.

Others count and reckon upon the time that is lost; that is, they reckon up the whole measure and duration of three or fourscore years, and never make a deduction of the time that is lost. And for instance, so much time is lost in sloth and idleness; for tho' men are apt to complain of the shortness,
ye

yet many of them find it as a burthen in their hands; they know not how to dispose of, or what to make of it; 'tis something they have little use for, and know not what to do with, but let it slip from them without observation, in unactiveness and careless neglect. So much time is spent in sleep, which to our very senses is so much time lost; since when it was passing, we had no perceptions of the same, and so could not count it in our thoughts; but when awakened, must judge of it by another measure. So much time is spent in vain thoughts and impertinent digressions of the mind, whereby there is no connected or orderly succession of ideas, and so the measure of that time is also lost. Again, so much time is spent in heart-dividing cares and vexing fears, which is a portion of time of so little value, that men are content to bury it in deep sleep. And when all these deductions are made, how short is man's time on earth! and how little or nothing in comparison of eternity! and yet in the ordinary computation of the threescore or fourscore years of a man's life, all these parts of time ordinarily come into the reckoning, and swell the account.

Others again, tho' they see themselves nearer the end of time, yet they reckon not upon being nearer eternity. There cannot be a greater stupidity than this; since 'tis certain there can be no medium betwixt time and eternity: for as soon as we are carried down to the end of time, we launch out into the ocean of boundless eternity. And yet men, whose thoughts have been wholly possessed with time and its enjoyments, cannot bring their minds to think on eternity. Hence, tho' they see themselves near the end of time, they never think on eternity. Tho' one would think that the nearer we draw to the conclusion of time, we should be the more awakened with the lively views of eternity; yet 'tis not always so,

So, but often it happens, that these who have been always in use to think that eternity is far off and at a distance, cannot be brought to think that it is near; which arises not so much from a senselessness of time, as a thoughtlessness of eternity.

Lord teach us so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom. Time glides away swiftly and passes on without delay. Every day brings us a step nearer to eternity; and 'tis but a small part of it that now remains to do all that is to be done, or can be done, for an eternal life and happiness. And are we redeeming it for this end? Is this the use we are making of our time? Are we living in it, or only spending and consuming it away? We are flying away like shadows, and fade like the flowers of the field, and every hour of that time must be precious, on which depends a blessed eternity, or which is intended as a preparation for the same: and do we so value and improve it? Are we casting up daily our accounts with God, and keeping matters clear between him and our souls? Are we busy in doing the best things in the manner we can through grace? *O that there were such a heart in us! O that we knew the things that belong to our peace, before they be hid from our eyes!*

We are hastening to the house of eternity, and the few sands that are running will soon be gone. Yea, suppose we should live to the utmost period of human life, how soon will it be over? This floating world is near its port: the sails of man's life are contracted. 'Tis but a point of time we have to live, and shortly it will not be so much as a point in comparison of never ending eternity; for millions of millions of millions of millions of ages can have no proportion at all to a duration, that hath no term, bounds or end. And since the all of our happiness through eternity depends on our due valuation and improvement

MEDITATION XXVIII.

The Security of impenitent sinners is amazing.

THE living know they must die: *For what man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?* How is it then that so many, who never yet repented of sin, or accepted of a Saviour, do yet bear up themselves in such mirth and jollity? One would think, that the man that believes he hath a soul; that minds there is an eternity; that death is the last step to it; that there is no returning from the dead to amend what is amiss; that what preparation can be made for an invisible world, must now be made: one would think, I say, that this should alarm and awaken the sleepy sinner, fill him with fear and terror, and make him, if there is any hope, to call on his God, and close with the Redeemer for his pardoning and sanctifying grace, that he may escape the wrath that is to come: and that 'tis otherwise with a great part of mankind, that they live as securely in sin, as if there were no death, no judgment, no hell, and so dance on the sides of the pit. *O amazing stupidity!*

Impenitent sinner, what's the ground of such foolish confidence? is it because sentence is not speedily execute against the workers of iniquity, therefore ye think ye shall always escape? But did not God wait longer on the old world, even an hundred and twenty years? And yet at last he brought down his hand heavily on them; so that the rebellious race are now among the congregation of the dead, and their souls kept in the prison of hell. And so also your day is coming; a day ye need not desire, seeing 'tis a day of darkness and gloominess, and of the shadows of death.

Or do you dream of an eternity in time, swelling
your

your fancy as big as you can with a vain conceit of a very long time of it here on earth? And hence every one of you is ready to say, or think in yourselves, I shall live to do this and that, and execute this and the other design: I shall be happy to day, and tomorrow shall be as this day, and more abundantly. But proud, presumptuous worm, will death wait thy pleasure? Or expect its commands from thee? Or can any of these big I's of thine stand before its power when it has received its commission? How soon will the sentence pass against thee: go down to the dust thou great I, go down to hell thou proud I!

Or dost thou fancy thou hast built thy nest so high and sure in the world, as that there is no pulling thee down? But whence is such security and damage? For notwithstanding of thy vain hope, thou shalt be brought low, low in the innermost parts of the earth, low enough when laid in the deep pit of destruction. For thy thine excellency should mount up to heaven, and thy head should reach the clouds: yet thou shalt perish for ever like thine own dung, and they which have seen thee, shall say, where is he? And where can ye flee to in that day, or where will ye leave your glory? For when ye die, ye shall carry nothing along with you, nor shall your glory descend after you, nor is there ought left of thy earthly pleasures, unless the ends of the valley can be sweet to your interred carcasses.

Or is it possible thou canst imagine, that by any power, or honour, or wealth, or interest in the world, thou mayest purchase a pardon, or prevail with death, when its breaking thy heart, to suspend its execution? But where is the man that could do so before you? Or dost thou think to purchase a place in heaven, and raise thy soul unto it? But these that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches, cannot redeem their own

their brothers, so precious is the redemption of a soul.
Or dost thou dream thy state shall be mended in the other world? But what ground is there for such an imagination? If thy soul depart out of this into the other world, under the reigning power of sin, thy state is irremediable, for as the tree falleth, so it lieth. Thou cannot, impenitent sinner, keep thy soul out of hell, nor even separate it from that hell that is already in it. There the wrathful and envious person, when he sees many coming from the East and from the West, and from the South, to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, while he himself is cast out, shall rage in diabolical hellish fury. The sensualist there shall suffer torment in an inextinguishable thirst to cool his lust, or to cool his tongue tormented in these flames, and eternally despair of enjoying the same. And when the proud shall see a poor ulcerous Lazarus preferred to a rich delicate Dives, malice, hatred and envy will eternally gnaw their hearts, and chase them into self-tormenting furies.

Let sinners in Zion be afraid at this, and let fearfulness surprise the hypocrites in heart, when 'tis not death only, but hell also that is before them. They see death riding on a black horse, and hell following after. And what reprobate fear and astonishment must at length seize the secure impenitent sinner, when the pale soul shall sit trembling on the quivering lip, at the sight of death's near approach, sent from an injured Saviour and offended Judge, to summon him before his righteous tribunal. And the man thinks he hears already the fatal doom pronounced. Go ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels!

Wherefore do the wicked contemn God? Why do they live, as if heaven were only a fanciful land, and

and hell only a painted fire? Why can neither the torments of the damned work on their fear, nor the joy of the glorified work upon their hope? Why can nothing prevail upon them that is said of mercy or justice, of heaven or hell, or of the sufferings and love of Christ? Is it because they are resolved to give God and Christ an absolute final refusal, and determined to have nothing to do with heaven for ever? No, they dare not be so desperate in their resolutions. They shiver and shrink at such a thought. And what is then their way of stifling all convictions and hardening their hearts against all reproofs? Why, one device among others, whereby they fatally cheat themselves out of their own souls, they hope for a death-bed repentance!

And 'tis a case indeed that often happens, that many who have lived very carelessly, and neglected the great salvation, yet when a dying, have been filled with grief and terror; and hence cry out, O death! stay thy hand, spare me this once, and I shall live more tenderly and circumspectly, and be better than ever I have been; for it repents and grieves me at the heart, that I should so much have lost my time, and forgot the great concerns of my soul.

But who can be sure this is true and genuine repentance? When a man is in grief and agony upon the terrible sight of grim death, and the yet more frightful prospect of the endless torment beyond it; is this a true godly sorrow for sin, or is it not as likely to be a grieving, that he is to be made miserable for sin, as a grieving that by sin he hath dishonoured God? Is it not most probable, that 'tis only a grief and sorrow, that sin and misery are so fatally chained, as that one cannot sin safely, or cannot sin without being miserable? The after-lives of many, who have been brought back as from the gates of death, relapsing unto their former wickedness, after

After all their professions of sorrow and vows of amendment, shew what little weight is to be laid on such sick-bed agonies of mind, and how little they are to be trusted. And how can the fear of wrath and hell so suddenly melt and mould down a soul into a true sincere contrition for sin; which never works kindly without a believing apprehension of mercy? Will it be so easy to attain a fiducial recumbency on Christ, while the man has not only the anguish of sickness and pain upon him, but also is racked with an amazing fear of wrath, as hard at hand? 'Tis hard to attain to this while an exercised soul is in health, and has all means of grace and opportunities of attending them with care and diligence, as it were in his hands; much harder in dying agonies.

This is not intended to discourage, or to cause a despair of a sick-bed repentance; and far less of an old age repentance. There is an instance of the thief on the cross, to shew that it is possible; and we find some accepted to be Christ's servants, who came not to work in the Lord's vineyard till the eleventh hour. But my design is to deter people from trusting to the same, and to quicken all to mind the one thing needful without delay. We have the pardon of our sins to attain, and our peace to make with God: we have dead hearts to get quickened, and hard hearts to get softened, and many lusts and corruptions to get mortified: and all this, in dependence on the blessed Redeemer, is to be done in time: and the preparation of our souls for a blessed eternity, is a work so great, as should command the best and whole of our lives. Therefore, sluggish and drowsy sinner, rise up, *work out thy salvation with fear and trembling, for 'tis God that worketh, and willet in us to do according to his own good pleasure.*

P A R T II

*The Believer's pleasant Prospect through
the Valley of Death.*

SHOULD we confine our thoughts only to death, and its penal consequences, it would be a meditation so melancholy, as to draw a veil over the light of sun, moon and stars, and cover us and all the creation with a mournful habit: yea, chill our blood, and freeze our very spirits in us. But when we look upon death and life, as being in the hands of our Redeemer, who hath loved us, and who is the first and the last, and who was dead, and is now living, and behold he is alive for evermore; this gives every believing, humble, returning soul, such strong and everlasting consolation, as can enable him to look death in the face without any terror; yea, to look it out of countenance, and out of all its terrible appearances.

If a believer is lively and vigorous in the exercise of grace, whatever way he shall view death, whether in its nature, or in its consequences, he hath sure foundation of comfort against it.

MEDITATION I.

The incarnation of the Son of God is a fundamental consolation against the fearful apprehensions of dying.

JESUS CHRIST the Son of the living God hath taken upon him our nature, and therefore, we may

may be sure this nature of ours, tho' death and a thousand changes should pass upon it, cannot be utterly lost. For besides that the human nature subsists for ever in Christ, for what end would the Son of God, who needeth neither us nor our nature, come down to dwell in it, if, after all this mighty condescension he should dwell in it alone; as he would do at last if we did not subsist in death and after death?

He hath taken on him our nature, when it was mortal and under the sentence of death. The Lord of life hath done this, which certainly must have some great and good meaning to us; and less in it cannot be, than life to us for evermore. For life itself would never unite with death but with a design of swallowing up death in victory.

If the Son of God hath assumed our nature, he cannot but love the same, as that which he hath a part in. And hence we may be sure, he will be forthcoming, either to support it under all the shocks that would tear it in pieces, or else restore it again when succumbing, and raise it again tho' laid low, even in the lower parts of the earth.

He hath assumed our nature with all its natural weaknesses; therefore, as he knows the utmost our nature can bear, and what would utterly undo it, so he hath a sympathy with us in all our troubles, griefs and calamities; and if we are interested in him, we may be sure he will succour us in the hour of death, and bear us thro' the conflict with the last enemy.

If the consubstantial Son of God dwells in the nature of man, then certainly the design of this wonderful condescension in him, and mighty honour done to us, is not to be confined to the few hasty and troublesome days we have in this frail and short life. Certainly 'tis to reach wide and extend far, even unto the utmost bounds of eternity; or as long

as the union between the two natures subsists in him, who hath an unchangeable priesthood. And to be sure then, the efficacy of this mysterious union must comprehend in it a glorious resurrection of the body, and an immortal happy life to the soul.

O my soul, if thou art vitally united to Christ by a true and lively faith, thou hast a most sure pledge of an happy life and subsistence for ever. Why, thou art related to the Son who abides for ever. Thou hast contracted a likeness to him who hath been of old, and is from everlasting to everlasting God. If the Son of God, who is the prince of life, hath taken on him our flesh, what can he design less in this, but that we should receive his Spirit, which is a well of water in the soul; that, notwithstanding death is in the way, runs higher and higher till it empty itself into eternal life. O! how sweet is this thought, that 'tis a God incarnate we have always and immediately to do with, living and dying. Certainly 'tis enough to convince me, as of his ability, so also of his willingness to save me. That God himself is come so near me, as to unite himself personally with my nature; what more significant proof can I desire of his good will unto the children of men! and how eminently is our nature honoured, vile as it is through sin, by not only its affinity but even its consanguinity with the person of *Immanuel*! and hence, whatever bloody conflicts this nature of mine may sustain with death, yet if I'm in Christ, neither death nor life can dissolve my relation to him.

MEDITATION II.

*Christ's dying affords great Encouragement
against the Fears of Death.*

CHRIST the Son of God died in the true and proper sense of dying; for tho' it was in his power to lay down his life, and in his power to take it up again, yet when he submitted to be man, and in that nature submitted to pains of death, death was such a cruciation and violence to his nature, as was sufficient to rent his soul from his body, and dissolve the vital union between them. And if so, then tho' death be violent our to nature, and cause exquisite pain and trouble, even such as is sufficient to rent between soul and body, yet in all this it doth no more what it has done to the best that ever lived, not only to prophets, apostles, martyrs and all the holy men in the ages before us, but even so hath it done to the Son of God.

The blessed Jesus had experience of death in all its pains and agonies; for he encountered it when armed with the flaming sword of justice, when sharpened with a deadly sting, and when pointed with the dreadful curses of the law. And death having wreckt its spite, spent its strength, and left its sting in Christ, as a surety for his people, what real hurt can it do unto them? It lays by indeed the body, and with it the body of sin, it looseth the bonds of a prisoner, and lets the soul go free; and where is the harm of this? Is it not this that we are oft longing for? All true believers are many a time wishing, praying, groaning and panting for the nearest conformity to God, and communion with him; and if death lets us to that we would fainest be at; if it lets us to the nearest presence of our own God

and Saviour: if it dismisses us to our home, to our own country and inheritance: what is there in this that can be matter of terror or grief to the soul? Yea, what is there in it that is not matter of the highest joy?

We are certain that death is not to every one an inlet to eternal misery, by this infallible proof, that Christ the Son of God died, and having risen again, hath ascended into heaven, whereof he hath the sovereignty, and the disposal of all its mansions. For the heavens, yea the heaven of heavens are our Lord's, who hath the keys of the invisible world, and of death the entrance thereto. By virtue of which a believer can also die, and be happy in dying. He died who is now living, and behold! is alive for evermore; for death could not hold him down, and as little can it hold us down, if we take hold of our Redeemer, and enter into the lists with death under his protection.

Death in its own nature was the curse preying upon the sinner, and rearing the vitals both of his soul and body: and in its own nature it was a door to hell; the separation between soul and body did forebode an eternal and accursed separation of the soul from God. But to a believer the nature of death is altered, and its power and property changed. He can die without the curse of dying; die, and yet live in dying; die and survive death; die, and instead of death's being the messenger of justice, to take hold of him, and hale him to the prison of hell, the worst thing it does, is to draw aside the vail, that intercepts his sight of heaven, and hinders his approach into the same; he can die, and by death be let into Emmanuel's lands of light, life and joy, where there is no darkness nor shadows of death for ever.

The Son of God died, as the last and finishing part of

of his sufferings. His sufferings terminated and ended in death, and now he dieth no more, and suffereth no more. So a believer, if he die once, he can die no more forever. 'Tis but a fighting life the gracious soul hath hereaway; from his first listing himself under Christ's colours; without are fightings, and within are conflicts and fears; and great is his agony with men and devils, with inbred corruption, and an ensnaring vexing world, and last of all come on the terrible shocks of death, that great and last enemy: but when once through the last conflict, then ends all the believer's warfare and trouble, and then begins the glory and happiness that shall never have an end.

Thomas Didymus loved good company well, when upon the intimation of Lazarus's death he saith, *Let us go and die with him.* And sure we have much more reason to say, *is Christ dead, let us die with him.* Death is not undesirable, if it were no more but to keep company with Christ, or to get into his company who dieth no more. It is no small comfort to the Christian in his views of death, to think who are before him, even prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, and all our Christian friends, that are now gone off the stage of this life. But 'tis infinitely more solacing to think, that Jesus Christ, the best friend and greatest lover of souls, is gone before us; and that we shall pass through death for this very end, that we may be for ever with the Lord.

Death is none of these dark, dry and solitary places, where only devils haunt and resort. The best that ever lived have entered into and passed through that valley, even the Son of God; and when we are dying, we are but in the path, which the prince of life hath trodden before us; who hath passed through this dead sea, and thereby hath prepared a way to us through this depth into the heavenly *Canaan*.

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We may be sure enough that death is a step, in order to some great things beyond it; for Christ the Son of God had never died, but in order to some greater glory to be attained after dying. And so also his people may rest in this, that there is something beyond death that is well worth the dying for.

MEDITATION III.

Christ's victory over Death fills the Heart of a Believer with marvellous Confidence and joy against the slavish Fear of dying.

SINCE Christ by his death hath destroyed the power of death, then death is no more death to a believer; 'tis a destroyed thing; and therefore if 'tis inflicted, 'tis for another end than the first original design thereof; that is to say, the death of a believer is not an answering, or a satisfying the first law of death.

The first constitution and law of death certainly meant, that as the soul for the sake of the body and its gross enjoyments had alienated itself from the life of God, and all the pure and spiritual enjoyments belonging to the same; so also the soul should be separate from its body, and torn from all the sensitive pleasures belonging to it. And the retribution lies in this, that as sin hath separate the soul from all spiritual comforts, so death should separate it from all corporeal delights; that is to say, 'tis a statute in heaven, which follows also unavoidably in the nature of things, that he who can find no delight in God, shall find nothing else in eternity to delight in.

But to a gracious soul the matter is wholly altered; for the law of the spirit of life, having made him free from the law of sin and death, he can go out of this world possessed with such principles and comforts,

forts, as death cannot bereave him of, but which subsist in death, go with him through it, and are perfected in heaven.

Were there nothing in death, but a soul's retiring from the body, or an immortal spirit's getting free from the chains and incumbrances of matter, then death would be a pleasure, and not a pain, and the soul of man, upon death's near approach, might raise its neck in the pleasant expectation of a manumission from slavery, and a liberation from prison. But there is something more awful than this in death, as 'tis the wages of sin, and a judiciary sentence upon the sinner, if Christ had not died and overcome death: and he having done so, as our surety, the believer, tho' he is to meet with death at the end of his journey, yet not as any part of the curse, not as any entail of guilt, not as a punishment of sin, nor as a token of the divine displeasure.

But the believer may set death before him in another view, and see it quite in another light. He may take up the matter thus, that here is an order of spirits (whether specifically or gradually different from angels is not now the question) but here is an order of spirits placed in bodies, therein to gather the revenue and tribute that is due unto God, from the glory of his wisdom, power, goodness, and all his other perfections, as they shine in this lower world; in gathering of which there is a service done unto God; and when we have done our work, and accomplished our days as an hireling, these spirits are to remove out of their bodies, to enter into society with those that above encompass the throne of God.

And now when death is set off in this light, what can be in it or its consequences, that can be terrifying to a gracious soul? A soul indeed that is carnal and earthly; a soul that cannot discern nor affect the things of God; a soul that finds no delight in any thing

thing heavenly and divine; a soul that tastes no pleasure but in corporeal gratifications; that soul will count the very laying by its body, and with it all bodily delights, to be a death indeed, a death with a witness, yea, death with a vengeance, yea, a very hell to it. But has a soul the principles of spiritual life insaid in it? Has it got a way of living by faith? Living above the world, and living on heavenly delights? Will a man so endued and qualified think it a hardship to die? Quite contrary, he knows that as the bird is brought to perfection by the ruins of the shell, so by the shaking off his body, his spirit is made perfect, and finds itself in a new element, where it breathes the pure air of glory.

O sweet comfort to a gracious soul! he can think on death and the other world without terror, yea, with a high complacency of spirit! the impenitent ungodly sinner dare not think on dying, and yet the terrible form of death is still before him; and let him do what he will to divert his mind from such dismal views, yet his fear every now and then turns upon him with a terrible gloom, and causes great restlessness in his spirit. But the righteous hath hope in his death, and can look it in the face; as not being to him a domineering tyrant, not having the frightful countenance of an executioner of wrath, but as having the pleasant aspect of a messenger of peace, carrying him home to his father's house.

MEDITATION IV.

Peace with God through Jesus Christ our Saviour, is a special Consolation against the Fear of Death.

IF we are in favour with God, we are as much the beloved of the Lord dying as living. For precious

in God's sight is the death of his saints: and if as much loved of God in death as in life, we may be sure we shall be as well dealt with. For certain it is, that he who calls himself not the father, but the Creator of bodies, but calls himself the father of spirits; certain it is, this God and father of spirits has not emptied all the store of his fulness on bodies, and has nothing left for spirits. On the contrary, it is evident, the more resemblance beings have to their original, as they are the more capable, so they shall have the greater share of his divine communications. What! need the angels! need the seraphims of light! need the cherubims of glory! need they be beholden to bodies for a happiness, or borrow their main delights from matter! as little doth a separate soul, that is loved of God, and a lover of him.

The sin and misery of man while here lies in this, that having no delight in God, or in his favour, he places his love and delight on objects that disappoint his hope, and baulk his fancy. But is a soul gone out of this world to the next, reconciled to God, and well affected to him? Then that soul shall be entertained with such joys, as do not come short, but infinitely exceed all he can hope, believe, or think about them. Infinite excellencies are there exhibited for the creature's contemplation and fruition, so far as his capacity can admit. All perfections objective and subjective are there enjoyed in that land of light, where there are no overshadowing types: and when the affections have there extended and stretched themselves to their uttermost, the objects do infinitely transcend them; and the letting the believer to this is all that death doth to him.

O happy spirit! that hath removed from its body, and retired into the invisible world, in favour with God, and well pleased in the interest it hath in the glory and fulness of the Deity: where it finds infinite excellencies

excellencies infinitely satisfying : where the object of enjoyment, of all possible objects, is infinitely the best : and where the affection of delight is now rightly placed, and having no rivalling objects, it becomes perfectly strong and ravishing.

O my soul, art thou well affected to God ? Hast thou a heart-delight in his excellencies ? Dost thou wish well to his glory ? Art thou pleased with the display of all his perfections, especially as they are manifested in Christ ? Then if death admits thee to where there is a full sight of God in all the glories of his Deity, and where there is a full sense and fruition of his all-sufficiency, wilt thou not be content of this ? what ! O my soul, is it not this, and the like of this that thou wast praying for, groaning for, and wrestling for a great part of thy days ? Is it not nearness to God, and communion with him, that thou art secretly breathing and earnestly panting for ? Is not this the very end thou proposhest to thyself in ordinances, graces, duties and privileges ? And if death compleats thy wish and answers thy desire, is it for this an enemy ? Or should I not rather be desirous to say with the apostle, *That to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain* ?

MEDITATION V.

Pardon of Sin purchased by Christ is another special Consolation against the Fear of Death.

IF there is not only a sickly and dying body, but also a diseased and loathsome soul : if not only outward troubles harraiss a man, but inward terrors overwhelm his spirit : if the body is not only torn with pain, but also the mind is racked with guilt : if thro' the pollution and guilt of sin, death is looked upon

upon as a dark vale to the dark vault and prison of hell, then death casts up to the soul in its most awful and gloomy terrors.

But, on the other hand, if there is, through Christ and faith in his name, a pardon of iniquity, transgression and sin, a pardon so full as to extend to all sorts, sizes and aggravations of sin, and so freely offered, as that any may have it who have a mind; that is, any may have it, who are truly willing to be freed from their sins, and forsake the same: this, if deeply apprehended and considered, and if seriously applied, cannot but afford such a satisfaction and joy, as can stand not only the shocks of affliction, but even of death itself.

Let sinners in Zion be afraid; let fearfulness surprise the hypocrites in heart; let their faces gather blackness, and their hearts meditate terror, upon the sight of death riding on a black horse, and hell following after. But all believing, returning, pardoned sinners may lift up their heads with joy, upon the near presages and approaches of death, because their full and compleat redemption draweth near.

'Tis the guilt of sin that presents death to the impenitent and ungodly sinner as the last and worst of evils, and the completion of all their miseries. They think little of quivering lips and ghastly looks in comparison of the fire of hell already begun to kindle, and flash on their consciences. They think little of the separation between soul and body, in comparison of the eternal exclusion of both from heaven and the happiness thereof. They think little of the troubles of their body, in comparison of the wrath of God already flaming on their souls. But is the guilt of all sin removed? Is the soul washen in Christ's blood? Is the conscience purged (and thereby pacified) from dead works to serve the living God? Then a man may say, as with a pleasant admiration of grace,

grace, so also with a humble and holy triumphing soul, The Lord is my light, and my salvation, shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my heart, what shall I be afraid? Tho' the mighty host of enemies should compass me, in this will I be confident: if God justifieth, who hath power to condemn, hence, tho' I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will not be afraid of evil, for thou art with me, and neither death nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, can separate me from thy love.

O my soul, if thou return unto the Almighty with all thy heart, and put away iniquity far from thy thoughts, and far from thy tabernacle; then, in the day of distress, and at the hour of death, thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, and deliver thee from going down: the Lord for his hath found a ransom. Hath the Lord dealt graciously with thee, O my soul, to humble, to break, to melt thy heart under a sense of sin, and to draw thee to Christ, to accept of him as thy Saviour, and to resign thyself to him as thy Lord? Then thou art in a pardoned state, and pardon being an immunity from all real evils, death thou couldst not meet with, if it could do thee any evil, or if it did not put an end to all evils.

O my soul, if by a fiducial apprehension of Christ for pardon, and by finding the power of sin broken, and the pollution of it purged away, and feeling the conscience upon all this made light and easy, thou satisfiest thyself that thou art in a pardoned state; then the day of death may be lookt upon as thy birth-day into a new world, even the world of light and joy, and as thy ascension day to glory.

And if death is lookt upon as a door or passage into eternal life, and as a step, tho' dark, into the light, some lands of glory; then the soul that desires these good

good heads will welcome the summons of death, as bringing glorious things of great and eternal joy.

Medi. VI.

The indwelling Spirit of God is such a Pledge of a blessed Immortality and eternal Life to the Believer, as gives him great Assurance in a dying Hour.

WHEN the Spirit of God is given to enlighten our minds, in order to discern the reality and excellency of spiritual things, and to out-reason us out of all inward thoughts of a happiness in the pleasures of sense, the pride of life or the mammon of unrighteousness: what can be the design of all this, but as to fit us for, to also to assure us of an eternal happy life, just on the other side of death? For why should men be taken off their conceits of the things of this life, if there were nothing better to be had, or if there was not an inheritance for souls, more suitable and more enduring than what is to be possessed on earth?

Is it not the very design of the Spirit's illumination to satisfy the soul, that the all-sufficiency of God and immediate dependence on the same, that conformity to God and immediate communion with him, are the best things for immortal spirits? And how could this appear, if there was not a pleasant prospect beyond death? Or if it should happen, that after such a light from heaven hath shined upon the soul, that yet it shall be buried for ever in the darkness of the grave? No, to be sure this cannot be. Certain it is that such a spiritual and heavenly light beaming upon the soul must be a sure pledge of the light of glory, which death cannot bereave the soul of for ever.

When the Spirit of Christ is given to quicken dead souls, this must be in order to an eternal life in heaven, which death cannot kill, nor the grave bury. If the soul that was dead in sin is made alive to God, and to live above the world; to what purpose is this, if it had no connection with an eternal happy life in heaven? Since man can answer all the purposes of this earthly, this animal life, as well without as with the same: 'tis evident this spiritual life infused in the soul is to serve higher ends than what are attainable here away: and less cannot be in it, than the preparing of the soul for a life of glory. When the Lord implants the principles of spiritual life in the soul, all its powers and affections are turned towards God, and it says of him, he is all my desire, and all my delight. And if death cannot kill these divine affections nor extinguish such divine joys; and if they can go with a soul through death, 'tis evident they are so many pledges or beginnings of an eternal life in heaven.

And when the leading Spirit of God is granted to believers, to what does it lead them but to Heaven? The Spirit of God can lead us no where but to himself. And if the Spirit lead us God ward and heavenward, and if that way lies through death, we may be sure, that the good hand of God will be on us through that dark valley.

Again, when the Spirit of the Lord strengthens us against temptations and weaknesses, and comforts us under heavy pressures, this must be to help us heavenwards. Who but he that is greater than the world, can enable us to live above it, and to crucify and mortify its appetites and lusts? The consolations of the Spirit, as they are greater in themselves than what we can find in the world, so they refine and purify the heart from unhallowed pleasures. Which consolations could not take place, were it not for the full enjoyment

enjoyment of God which we have a prospect of in the other world. And hence such strengthening and comforting influences of the Spirit make sure work of heaven, by this good token that they begin it, and are as the arles or earnestes of the same.

O my soul, hast thou at any time found the word shining as a light in a dark place? Are thy meditations thereof sweeter than honey from the honey-comb? Dost thou sweetly acquiesce in its promises, and unfeignedly submit to its precepts? Well then, let death come; for though it will bereave thee of other comforts, it cannot bereave thee of the comforts of God's word: *For the word of the Lord endureth for ever.* Though death can shut thine eye upon the light of the sun, it cannot raze from thy mind the dictates and comforts of God's word. And hence the soul having so much in hand, besides what it has in hope, it hath laid up a good foundation for the time to come, and the eternity that is ever coming, and never to come to an end.

O my soul, canst thou not say something feelingly of the influence of the Spirit of God, in bending thy heart, and turning all the powers and affections of thy soul towards him, so as to say in a sensible manner, *Whom have I in the heavens, but thee, O Lord, and there is nothing in the earth that my soul desires besides thee: my meditation of thee is sweet, and I will be glad in the Lord; I'll say of God that he is my chief joy and my eternal excellency.* Why then should not this lift up the heart at the prospect of death, which will leave on this side of it all things that matted and interrupted thy delight in God and the blessed Redeemer.

Hast thou not, O my soul, some experience of the leading of God's Spirit, when thou wast in plunging and perplexing difficulties, and knew not what to do, yet by committing thy way to the Lord, hast thou not

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found that he hath led the blind in a way he knew not? And why should I fear, when under so good a hand, to descend into the dark and horrid valley of death? Why should I not trust that he will lead me safely through that untrodden path? For who can imagine, that the Lord would conduct us in life, and then leave us to wander and make out our own way thro' the dark step of death?

When it has been a sad night of darkness, trouble and horror with thee, O my soul, hast thou not found that in the valley of *Achor* he hath opened a door of hope? And dost thou not trust, that he will not shut up this door, when thou passest through death? especially when no door of hope can be cast open, which opens not a passage through death, and which gives not a prospect of a blessed immortality and eternal life beyond it.

O my soul, has not the Lord's Spirit helped thee, under many weaknesses and backsliders from corruption, in some measure to resist and overcome temptations, to subdue the flesh, to crucify the world, to deny self, to take up the cross, and to follow him? And if he has begun, will he not perfect his own work of grace in the soul? Will he forsake the work of his own hands? Will he suffer any vitally united to the prince of life to be swallowed up by death? Is the like of this cannot be brought about without a day of his power, can death be too strong for the power of our *Immanuel*? Or shall not he who hath vanquished death by his death, much more triumph over it by his life?

MEDITATION VII.

The great and Precious Promises of the Gospel are great Supports in dying.

THE believer is a stranger and pilgrim in a strange land. The country he travels into is his own is heaven; and many a dark and deep sleep lies in his way; and the darkest and most plunging sleep of all is the last, when he is to walk through the ford of death. But the promises are the pilgrim's staff on which he leans by faith, and hereby is supported in his heavenly walk.

As one said when a-dying, he was jumping into the dark; so in death there would be a wandering in the dark, yea a jumping into utter and eternal darkness, beyond which could be seen no light, if it were not for the rays of light that glimpe from the promises.

When in a dying hour sin casts up terribly in the soul, and is like to overcast and overwhelm it with clouds and storms of wrath, the promises of pardon and life to humble, believing, returning sinners are such warrants for faith and hope, as that the soul may lay hold on them, and hold them up before the Lord, and claim, or at least plead, the benefit of them. And hence, while others tremble with terror, he may triumph with joy; for, he can say, I know that I shall be justified.

When a believer finds his soul departing from his body, if upon this his hope should begin to mingle, because his heart and flesh are like to fail; yet what is sufficient to support him, is the promise of God, that he will be the strength of his heart, and his portion for ever. I am sibi, may he say, to my body, but am I not more nearly related to my Lord,

who hath my nature, who hath died for me, ransomed me, and made me fit for heaven's regions? and let me be once freed from the prison and trouble of this frail body, I shall enter into a more happy way of living than ever before, and share of joys as much above these of sense, as the Lord is more excellent than the body.

When it jumbles a man in his dying hours that he is about to enter into a state of life he knows so little about; besides that as little did he know, while in his mother's belly, the way of living in this world till he was brought into it; as little did he then know of the light of the sun, as he now knows of the light of glory; yea as little, till the Spirit of regeneration wrought a divine life in his soul, did he see of the glory of the Lord, shining in the face of Jesus Christ, and as little of all the beauties of that new creation, whereof Christ is the head. But besides all this, which may fully satisfy us, there is a promise of a perfect happy life for ever, which God, who cannot lie, hath promised before the world began.

Should the believer be sadly disconcerted with the terrible shocks of death, his conflict with the same being hard and violent; 'tis certain indeed that all things here seem to fall alike to all: there are some wicked who have no bands in their death, and there have been some godly sore put to it with hard wrestlings and violent throws. But yet the gracious soul has something to look to for comfort in his dying agonies that others have not: For tho' the passage be stormy and tempestuous, he knows of a safe arrival in these regions of immortality, where the inhabitant of the land shall not say he is sick; and an hour in heaven will make him forget all his sorrows for ever. A gale of sighs and sobs, and a flood of troubles and tears will follow the believer even unto

unto the threshold of heaven, but once pass it, set once foot on the other side, get once a waft of the air of glory, and then they cease for ever. The promises give a right to heaven, and death enters into the possession of heaven; and heaven will make more than an amends for all the troubles in the way to it. And what harm is there in dying?

Should a poor exercised soul be afraid, when it comes to a dying hour, lest Satan should harass and affright him with his violent buffetings and fiery darts, or lest the Lord himself should desert him in his greatest and last extremity, and leave him to tug with the terrible onsets of death in his own strength: It may quiet his mind, when he so expressly promises, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*. He that provides against all fears whatsoever, and says, *Fear not I am thy God, I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness*; hath he not given us such sufficient security, as to make one say, *Tho' I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me!*

There is more joy in one promise of the love of God and the life to come, than in all the honours, pleasures and profits of the world! blessed be the Lord for providing us such a rich magazine of promises! promises of light, life, pardon, purity, strength, counsel, comfort, and all other things necessary to carry us through this wilderness, and promises of at length, a safe passage through the dark valley of death, till we are brought into the land of uprightness!

O my soul dost thou value these great and precious promises above all things? Dost thou rest satisfied in them as thine inheritance? Dost thou apply them, improve them, and daily make use of them,

dangerous passage of death? Shall it be thought that the Lord will concern himself in me, and take care of me in life, and then overlook me, and let me shift for myself at death, and thus leave me forlorn and dead? No, to be sure he will not. The saints of old, who did sing of God's presiding over their lives had it alway, as especially in their eyes, his care of them in death, and that the same good hand that was on them in life, would not leave them in their last and greatest extremity. And as the glorious soul has the experience of a beckoning, so also of an overruling, constraining providence. He hath found often how the Lord hath broken the purposes of his heart, and by a sweet necessity hath constrained him to follow God's purpose, which is that of fitting and training him up for glory.

The man perhaps had laid a long series of projects, carried to a long futurity for him and his in the world: (an infirmity that even a good man like Baruch may fall into) but this being not God's design; his purpose on the other hand being, he should live like an immortal spirit, that is in a pilgrimage for heaven, and that he should value himself not so much from his relation to this world, as the text, not so much that his name is written on earth, as that 'tis enrolled in the records of heaven, and registered among the general assembly of the first born: this, I say, being the Lord's purpose of grace towards him, he is master of his own design, and is enabled by such a tryal of events, as that the man sees that even his worldly matters are not in his own hand, or by blowing upon his gettings, or by some stroke on his flesh, or some cross on his spirit, or by some interposition of his hand or other, he so overrules the spirit in man, as to bring him off his own

own purpose to follow God's; which is by several steps to prepare him more and more for glory.

And may not this administer rich comfort to the believer in a dying hour? Why! if I find, even while my spirit is in my body, that 'tis still in the hand of God, to rule, to check, to controul it in order to answer his designs of mercy; may I not be sure, he will not neglect me, or give up with me at death? A satisfying thought it is, to think that our souls are still in God's hands, even in the midst of a thousand sensible amusements that are like to run away with them; but much more to think we are in his hands in our last agonies.

O blessed Lord, my soul is always in thy hands, and there I leave it! 'tis a thing worthy of thee, to be the sanctuary of poor distressed souls! and who is more distressed than I am! and when will I be in greater distress, than when labouring under the painful efforts of a struggling departing life!

This is what thou hast said, O Lord, that thou wilt lead thy people, as by thy word and Spirit, so also by thy watchful providence: and where dost thou lead them, but to the land of uprightness? Is not this the ultimate term and design of thy special conduct? And I think I am satisfied, if I mistake not mine own heart, with all the methods and ways thou takest to carry me on in my pilgrimage to heaven, let them be never so rough to flesh and blood: and shall I not hope for the same divine conduct through the most dark and jumbling step of all, when I pass through the shadows of death.

Blessed Lord, if we had not thy kind hand to look to, what untowardness would there be in the spirit of man! what obstinate refusal to let it go, when thou calls for it! but since dying as well as living a divine care is over us, and a divine hand is on us, I desire through grace to be willing to depositate my soul

soul into thy hand, and to restore thee again what was thine own before. *Lord keep what I commit to thee against that day.*

MEDITATION IX.

The heavenly temper and deportment of a believer gives him a delightful prospect in dying.

SUPPOSE death at the door ready to rent the soul from its body, and to send it away into the invisible world. Suppose again that soul is so carnal, earthly and sensual, as it cannot discern, or affect the things of God, nor relish any but what is corporeal: is it not evident, were there even no after-reckoning, no future judgment, and no further vengeance, that such a soul, by laying by its body, and with this, losing all the enjoyments and pleasures it is capable of, would by that very separation be miserable for ever?

Let none promise to himself, that however he hath been a lover of earth more than heaven, and a lover of his pleasures more than of God, that yet for all this it will be better with him in a dying hour, or at least in a separate state, when he is out of the body, and freed from all its evil appendages. For let us suppose such a soul going out of time to eternity, so earthly and so sensual, as to delight most in the enjoyments of sense, and in the fond expectations of a happiness in them: when death shall awaken that soul out of its dream, and it finds itself stript naked of all its sensible objects, and under an eternal despair of ever again enjoying them: O how wretched must be its condition for ever!

Yea, let it be supposed, which yet can never happen, that such a soul should begin to think of being
con-

content with God, and the enjoyment of him in the other world, when it can find nothing else to entertain it. But how is this possible? How can a soul find content in looking upon the divine all-sufficiency, as only a secondary object of satisfaction? On the contrary, what eternal grumbling would it raise in the soul, to find itself so irrecoverably depraved; for besides that, such a separate soul would remain eternally destitute of all that it counts suitable and satisfying; besides this, a great part of the misery of the damned will be in self-loathings and sickly reflections of mind, that vanities, material and momentary pleasures have been and still are preferred to the infinitely glorious God, and glorious Redeemer.

On the other hand, where spirituality reigns, where grace has a powerful sway in the soul, where the soul is elevated to things heavenly and divine, where it courts the all-sufficiency of God, and the fulness of the Mediator its chief treasure and chief joy; where, I say, it is thus fitted for, and is part initiated in the angelic enjoyments above; what can death do to that soul, except by separating it from the inveigling and interfering objects below, it enters it to where there are full draughts of the pure rivers of life that flow from the throne of God and the Lamb?

It is certain, when a soul goes to heaven, it enters not into an heterogeneous state, or into a state it has no similitudes unto, or no principles to correspond to the same, and of which it has no manner of experience. For if so, heaven could never be the object of either its hope or desire, and heeoe the soul could never seek, affect, or prepare for the same. Whereby it is evident that heaven is but a further improvement of a life begun there already on earth: that is, heaven must go with a man into the other world; heaven must be in the soul, before the soul can

can be in heaven; and the whole of heaven consisting in perfect holiness, perfect likeness to God, and communion with him, the sanctified soul, from the native principles of grace, has a begun heaven, or a heavenly way of living in his soul. He can live on spiritual and divine meditations, whereby he can fetch from far and near all the amiable perfections of the Deity, all the alluring excellencies of Christ, and all the glories of heaven, to ruminate upon, and fill his soul with infinite contentment. He can live by faith, apprehending the fulness of God and of the Mediator, and applying them for use, to answer all his infinite occasions and exigencies. He can live by love, whereby the soul is infinitely pleased with God, and sweetly acquiesces in him as infinitely amiable. He can live by self-denial, whereby he can go out of himself to give room for God and Christ to be all in all to his soul. He can live by dependence on the Lord, finding enough in that all-sufficiency that's enough for all the angels in heaven. And he can live in a free and voluntary subjection to God, and hereby enjoy all the delights of a placid resignation to his will. Hence such a soul being to go out of this world with such divine principles wrought in it, I know, says he, how to live, and live happily in the next. Were there no more in it than what goes along with me, I know how to be happy. Yis in the other world my faith, if there be any place for it, shall make bright discoveries without the darkness and hesitation there is in unbelief. My meditation shall then be no longer distracted with the innumerable diverting and seducing objects of this life, but I shall contemplate the divine excellencies endlessly in themselves and in their communications: where I am sure I shall see enough to affect me with wonder, transport and joy for ever. Love shall then be no more in a contention or demur about different interfering and

and challenging objects; for there it finds its proper object, even him who is only lovely, and altogether lovely. 'Tis then that self-denial, that pleasant grace will be in its perfection; the proud flesh, which was the main thing that did compete, being laid in the grave. And dependence shall there have nothing to do, but to live and subsist immediately on the divine fulness. But the divine fulness! what can be better! what so good! yea what else can serve the turn! and 'tis then, that I'll count it my meat and drink to serve the Lord in a perfect manner; for there the competitors with the will of God are no more: corruption is extirpate; the flesh is laid by; the world is not, and the devils can never again reach me. How pleasant is the view that a sanctified soul may have through death, and beyond it!

O my soul, thou hast need to state this matter fairly to thyself, and uprightly, as in the sight of God. Whether thou hast a right unto, and art made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light: since 'tis only in this light the gloomy shadows of death are dispelled, and thou mayst enter into them with confidence, security and joy. O judge impartially, and pray unto the Lord, that he may help thee in the search: since 'tis as much as thy eternal life is worth should thou mistake. And before thou proceed further, make a pause, my soul; enter into a soliloquy and deep reasoning and communing with thyself: pose thyself with a few questions; but see that they be of such importance as to be sufficient to decide the case.

“O my soul, dost thou believe in the Lord Jesus with all thy heart? In pertuasion of his ability and willingness to save thee, dost thou stay thyself on him, and rely on his great sacrifice and merit, for pardon, righteousness, and life? And consenting to to him in all his relations, and offices, dost thou ap-
ply

by him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption? And venturing thy all in his hands, dost thou resign thyself unfeignedly to him? If so, this may comfort thee in a dying hour. *For this is the record, that God hath given us his Son, and life in him, and whosoever hath the Son hath life.*

"O my soul, art thou a humble, penitent mourner for sin? Hast thou such a tender heart, as plungeth thee into the depths of true evangelic repentance? Dost thou hate sin as it is sin, and this with a deadly hatred? And art thou busy in the use of all mortifying means to get the power of sin subdued, and the pollution thereof cleansed away? This may also afford a pleasant expectation after death: for then *those that have sown in tears shall reap a harvest of eternal joy.*

"O my soul, art thou sincere and pure in heart? dost thou keep thyself from thine iniquity? Dost thou separate thyself from sin, and state thyself against it as being thy deadly enemy? And art thou in hard exercise, by fasting, by prayer, by watching, by contemning this world, by strong resolves and earnest dependence on the Mediator's assistance, to get all thy corruptions mortified, and all thy lusts subdued? And art thou successful, having in part gotten the victory? Art thou in daily earnest contention against the body of sin and death? And dost thou put on to thy uttermost, through the grace of God, through the blood of Christ, through the efficacy of the promises, through the power of faith, and through the virtue of love, to cleanse thyself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit?" If so, this may yield thee a comfortable hope in death; since he hath the true hope of heaven, who *purifieth himself even as God is pure.*

"O my soul, dost thou love thy Redeemer? I ask thee again, O my soul, dost thou love thy Redeemer?"

dearer? Dost thou love him in sincerity, with a love that surpasseth all other loves? Dost thou scorn this world and all its pageantry in comparison of him? Art thou resolved never to be satisfied but in an interest in him, nearness to him, and communion with him? Dost thou give him thy very heart, to dwell in it, to rule in it, and to enrich it with his grace? And with thy heart dost thou make a voluntary surrender of all that thou art, hast or can do to him? That man is ready for dying, that can say with the Psalmist, *Whom have I in the heavens but thee, O Lord, and on the earth there is none I desire besides thee*: for he can also say, *though heart and flesh fail me, God will be the strength of my heart and portion for ever*. *O my soul, dost thou unfeignedly study a respect to all God's commandments? Dost thou seek the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness in the first place? Art thou loving mercy, doing justly, and walking humbly with thy God, and denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts? Art thou living soberly, righteously and godly in a corrupt evil world? Art thou giving up thyself to all the exercises of a holy life, and seasonably exercising these graces that directly terminate on God, and at the same time following whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are honest, and whatsoever things are virtuous? Is it thy daily business to be uniform as well as constant in all graces, virtues and duties that belong to the man and to the Christian? And so tenderly conscientious, as to look not only to the manner and bulk of thy duties, but also to the manner of them: not only to what is done, but also from what principles and for what ends it is done?* If through grace this be thy chief study and habitual business, thou mayst look upon death without ter-

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discipline of thy mercy, and to undergo any cure, how rough soever thou sees necessary, for the purging away and correcting all the remaining corruptions and disorders of my soul." If so, if this be thy real sense, O my soul, and if thou mayst not deny it in some measure before the Lord, then thou mayst go out of this world with joyful presages of a happy life in the next. *Mark the perfect, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.*

MEDITATION X.

There is no relief from the fears of death and hell, with which sin alarms the soul, but from the throne of grace.

SUPPOSE a soul has attained even that which is called a perfection of sincerity, yet that soul, if it hath got a thorough and heart piercing sense of the mass, vileness and strength of original sin, cleaving to his very flesh and bones; and also an affecting sense of all the evils of his heart and life; it may be his unbelief, his pride, his malice, his earthliness, his carnality, his sensuality, his lusts both of the flesh and of the mind, his ill-gotten goods, his oaths, his lies, his rotten communications, his intemperance, his impatience, his discontent, his self love, his mispent time, his profanation of sabbaths, his crucifying Christ at sacraments: in a word, all the sins of his regenerate and unregenerate state, containing transgressions against God, against man, against himself, against his soul, against his body, against the law, against the gospel, against light, and against love: all these laid open before the soul, cannot miss to cause it shrink before the Lord, and before the glory of his majesty and power; so that it says, who can stand before a holy God. *Lord, shouldst thou mark*

mark iniquities, I cannot answer thee one of a thousand.

Let him again take a serious view of the many sins and weaknesses that cleave to even his best performances; as for instance, what darkness is still upon his mind, what wandering and distraction of his thoughts from God, what dulness and slowness of heart to believe, what strangeness on his spirit there is many a time with respect to the things of God, and what coldness of love; what unsavouriness of mind in spiritual things, what backwardness to duty and weariness in it, what deadness of heart, and unevenness in a holy walk; what unthankfulness for mercies, and impatience in troubles; what little care to keep what we have received, and what grieving of the Spirit, by an unwatchful and offensive behaviour.

Such a deep and heart affecting sense of all the sins and evils of his heart and life, will make the gracious soul, in all humility, to own at the foot-stool of God's throne; Lord, 'tis not my righteousness, but my trespasses, that have gone up into the heavens; and 'tis not by works of righteousness which I have done, but 'tis according to thy mercy, that I am saved, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the holy Ghost. And it must be mercy indeed, even the mercy of a God, a God like mercy, a mercy that is infinite, the mercy of God in Christ, that can save me, or the like of me, a mercy established on the righteousness of Christ, in whom I desire to be found, *not having mine own righteousness, which is after the law, but his righteousness, which is of God by faith; and this is all my salvation, and all my relief under fears.*

For who is he that believeth a word of what the scripture reveals of the holiness and majesty of God, of the purity and spirituality of his law, and of the malignity and evil of transgressing the same, that will

not be willing to own upon his knees, and in humility to say, *I am a beast before thee, O Lord! I am more brutish than any man; I am earth, dust, ashes, any thing that's naught, as unworthy a worm as creeps on God's earth; and I blush and am ashamed to lift up my face before thee, O Lord.*

Yet seeing there is a throne of mercy, and seeing this throne is not erected on the ruins, but on the establishment of justice; seeing justice and judgment are the very dwelling-place of the throne of mercy; seeing 'tis Christ sitting upon the throne that makes it a throne of grace, who hath atoned justice, *finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness*: O blessed Lord, this rears up my dejected soul with hope and comfort.

Was there any competition between the glory of God and the happiness of man, then all hope in a sinner would be utterly and eternally cut off: for God made all things for himself. But since the throne of grace is erected on God's justice, thro' the surety righteousness of his Son, a righteousness that can for ever deliver us from our judge; and since hereby it becomes not only an act of mercy, but an act of righteousness in God, to pardon all believing, repenting, returning sinners; O blessed Lord, as thou hast given me a heart that's willing and desirous above all things, to be freed from the guilt, power and pollution of sin, so thou hast given me confidence to believe in thee for the remission of sins: let it be seen, I pray thee, what infinite mercy, and infinite merit, and infinite power can do, in pardoning and purifying a guilty polluted soul.

Can any sin of man exceed the virtue of the blood of God, which is of infinite value, to purify and pacify the conscience? Can any unrighteousness of man do more for his condemnation, than the righteousness of God can do for his absolution and justification?

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on? Or can any misery of man non-plus the wisdom, mercy and power of God?

O blessed Lord, were there even another way of attaining wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, than by the satisfaction, merit and grace of Christ; I would chuse this way rather than any. I like to be wholly dependent on free grace, and wholly obliged to Christ for righteousness and life: and, since this grace is so freely offered, I see nothing to hinder me from embracing and relying on the same? 'Tis an act of mercy, and to whom can it be more so than to me? 'Tis given to the poor and needy, and who needs it more than I do? 'Tis given to manifest the glory of the rich grace of God, and where can grace display more gloriously its inexpressible freeness, and irresistible strength, than in such a poor object as I am? I flee then to the throne of grace; I embrace my Redeemer, and rely on his righteousness. I hold my all, both of right and fitness for heaven, only of him. *Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight no flesh living can be justified.*

O what great relief is afforded to poor distressed sinners, from the rich mercy of God in Christ Jesus! 'Tis from this God's people of old have made use of the very greatness of their sins, as an argument to move the divine pity, and, under heavy pressures, have prayed with *David, Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great;* and with *Moses, Pardon, I beseech thee, the greatness of our sins, according to the greatness of thy mercy.* Again, poverty and necessitousness of spirit have also been allowed as an argument to draw on thy compassion and help: *O Lord, I am poor and needy,* may a man say, *Lord, make haste to help me.* Yea misery itself, even an extremity of misery, when humbly represented to the Lord, may be used as an argument for moving thee to help us:

for the Lord repents himself for his servants, when he sees their strength is gone, and that there is none shut up or left. And what the Lord has done to his ancient servants, or is wont to do to repenting, believing sinners, we may trust he will do so still.

And, O blessed Lord, if sins, if wants, if miseries have any thing of argument in them to move thy mercy and compassion, I do not want them; I flee for refuge to this hope set before me, and if I perish, I shall perish taking hold of the horns of thine altar, yea clinging about the footstool of thy throne. I see a fulness and freeness of grace in Christ to all that are willing, whatever they have been, and whatever they have done. O rich grace! O superabundant grace! and, by the help of the holy Ghost, I'll advance, come forward, and approach near to the throne of the Lamb, and touch his sceptre of mercy, which is also a sceptre of righteousness. I see all the rich grace, and rich mercies and compassions of God, opened up in him. I admire and adore all! I subscribe to the truth of his grace, and I cast myself at his feet, in dependence on the same. I look for salvation only at his hands; and I'll be resolute in believing, and never give it over, come of me what will; tho' the head hangs down, the lips quiver, the tongue faulter, the nerves shrink, the face turn ghastly, and the heart dies, I will still trust in him, and willingly yield up my soul into his hands.

MEDITATION XI.

This is the throne of grace, erected on the righteousness of our Mediator, that makes the grounds before mentioned to be sufficient and pleadable for hope and comfort in dying.

ALL the encouraging arguments from the influences of the Spirit, from the principles of a di-
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wine life in the soul, from the heavenly temper and constitution of a believer, have their weight and comfort from the throne of grace: 'tis there we may pray and plead with *David, Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight no flesh living can be justified.*

I am thy servant may the believer say, therefore my business lies before another court than the tribunal of justice. I am pressed down indeed with a body of sin; but for what end did the Son of God come down from heaven unto earth? Was it not to set up a throne of mercy to his servants, *that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible to lie or disappoint us, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to this hope set before us?* Mine iniquities, 'tis true, are many, but for what is there a throne of grace erected, but for the pardoning of sins? Thy word, O Lord, stands in record, *that he that cometh unto thee thou wilt in no wise cast him out;* and behold I come unto thee, thou art the Lord my God, and I trust in thee for acceptance: for tho' thou art not obliged to me, yet thou art obliged to thine own promise, and wilt certainly stand to thine own engagement.

If the Lord hath been pleased to vouchsafe the blessed influences of his Spirit to my soul; then 'tis not only an act of mercy, but 'tis a righteous thing in God, to try and acquit me, for the sake of his own Son, at the throne of his grace. For nothing that's good, nothing that's pure, nothing that's holy, could ever have lighted on my soul, if Christ had not appeared in the presence of his father, as my surety, advocate, and quickening head. And if the Son of God hath satisfied justice, and fulfilled the law, in my stead; and if he has united me to himself, by this sure token, of having made me a receptacle of his spirit, and a member of his mystical body; then

this very throne is established in righteousness, and it becomes an act of justice to forgive the sins of all interested in Christ.

If the Lord has given me a holy and spiritual disposition, may the believer say, to serve him acceptably; as this is owing to his free grace, so it could not be brought about without a day of his power upon my soul. And this grace which I have attained, weak as it is, it cost vast travail to the Redeemer, it cost him bleeding sorrows and bloody sufferings: and shall all this grace, this power, this cost, and this travail of the Redeemer be in vain? as it would be in vain, were there not a free absolution at his throne, or did not the throne of his grace secure all the effects of his purchase.

Could I indeed offer unto the Lord thousands of lambs, and ten thousand rivers of oil; should I harden my knees with devotion; could I pour out rivers of tears, and offer as many prayers to God as I have thoughts; I could not by all this blot out one sin, or acquire the least right or title to heaven. Yet if, through grace, I endeavour to approve myself to God, in the simplicity of an honest heart, and study to lead my life in the fear of God, and in faith, and in love, and in a stated subjection to his will, this being an evidence of a righteousness in Christ, and of a vital implantation in him, in whom alone we can be accepted, 'tis a sweet pledge of heaven, and comforts the soul in the faith and hope of the same.

O the strong and marvellous joy of a humble confidence in the mercy of God in Christ! and with what humble and earnest pleadings, will the soul that is solicitous in so great a concern, utter itself before the Lord, for the raising of its hope of glory! and O let not the Lord be angry, if extreme necessity, if eagerness of spirit, and the sweet encouragement.

couragements of the promises, put me forward to speak, and plead with him for the life of my soul.

Lord, thou hast already implanted in my soul some of the first principles of holiness; whereby I am possessed in some measure of the qualities and conditions of heaven: and wilt thou leave thy work imperfect, and begin in me what thou hast no mind to finish? Wilt thou begin a heaven in any soul, whose means shall drop into hell? Are there any in hell, who are contented to the covenant, believers in Christ, lovers of God, and admirers of free grace? Or have they a mark of hell on them, who are earnest students of holiness in heart and life, who hate sin, and are busy in all mortifying means to subdue it, and would die ten thousand deaths to get it wholly extirpate, root and branch?

O father of spirits! father of mercies! O lover of souls! Redeemer of souls! wilt thou damn the soul that loves thee? the soul that repents of sin, and turns to thee? the soul that hath fled under the wings of the Mediator? the soul that is breathing after heart purity and life purity, and the nearest conformity to thy nature, image and will? and, O eternal God and Saviour! wouldst thou lead its life with thee, and spend its time and eternity in thy presence?

Let not the Lord be angry, and I will yet speak. Shall not the judge of all the earth do right? Shall he not do according to his own constitution of grace, that excellent constitution settled in the all-sufficient, never-changing, wonderful *Immanuel*; and do according to all his methods of doing for ordinary, which is to carry on great designs by several gradual steps and preparations; and hence make grace, tho' it be small at first, like a grain of mustard seed, to grow up to a great tree, whose top reaches up to heaven: and will he not also do according to the nature

ture of things? For has the Lord so indemnified his people, upon their first believing in him, as that, by none of their infirmities or unallowed miscarriages, they totally forfeit the Spirit of God in his saving operations? then such a soul, notwithstanding all his sins, and the defects that cleave to his best duties, may yet habitually love God above all things, and study an habitual conformity to him. And can that soul that loves God, loves Christ, and unfeignedly studies a likeness to his image, and so finds the joy of divine love and divine likeness; can such a soul perish for ever?

Were it possible to set a soul, so spiritually attuned and affected, in the midst of hell, what could it suffer of its pains? Could it suffer the punishment of loss, of the loss of God, when God's presence is with it, by this sure token, that 'tis in part a partaker of the divine nature? Or could it suffer the punishment of sense, of the sense of God's wrath, when the goodness of God hath led it to repentance, warmed its heart to God, and transformed it into his likeness?

MEDITATION XII.

A lively exercise of faith is of the greatest efficacy to give us comfort in a dying hour.

THE sling of death is sin; but by faith in Christ, the soul receives a full remission of sin, and hereby death is subdued: for what can death do, when its sling is pulled out? Hence there is no death, no hell, no curse, no condemnation to him that is in Christ.

'Tis faith that receives the atonement, whereby peace is made between God and the soul. There is a war set on foot between the offended God and an offend-

ending sinner; and he can easily conquer, easily
with us to nothing; but he offers terms, upon
which he is willing to enter into covenant with us
and become our God; and the terms are, that we
should accept of the reconciliation, and receive it by
faith: this is what belongs to our peace; and solid
peace and comfort none can have, living or dying,
without it: for what solid comfort and peace, while
the arrows of God's indignation stick fast in the soul,
either by hardness of heart, searedness of conscience,
and the spirit of slumber, on the one hand; or by
horror of soul, or confusion of spirit, on the other?
Repentance indeed is necessary, but it is not enough;
it makes no expiation; and an interest in the favour
of God we cannot have, without an atonement
made to his justice; and this is done only by Christ,
and received by faith. And hereby the soul ap-
prehending God reconciled in Christ, and that his
wrath is pacified, offended justice hath nothing more
to exact, the believer can joy in God, through our
Lord Jesus Christ, by whom he hath now received
the atonement.

And as by faith God is reconciled to us, so also by
it we are reconciled to God: for, besides that it takes
away that natural distrust of God which alienates our
hearts from him, faith has such a way of taking down
and blasting all the glory of this world, in compari-
son of precious Christ, as in a great measure cuts off
the nourishment of our corruption, and kills our
lusts. And how willingly will that man, who counts
all things but loss and dung in comparison of Christ,
lay down his head and die, that he may be for ever
with the Lord?

'Tis this grace of faith also that interesteth the soul
in that great promise of the covenant, *I will be your
God, and dwell with you, and walk with you; I will
set my tabernacle among you, and my soul shall not abhor
you.*

you. He is not a stranger to his people, nor refuses them converse, but takes up his abode in their souls, and he dwells there by faith. The great Lord *Immanuel* is the great mean of our intercourse with the Deity; and 'tis by faith we come to him, and to the father by him; and hence, with a humble triumph, we may say in our dying moments, *tho' heart and flesh fail, God will be the strength of my heart and portion for ever.*

And 'tis by faith that a man can commit all things, that relate to his flesh or to his spirit, in this world or the next, through time and eternity, into the hands of his Redeemer. I deposite, can he say, myself, my soul, my body, living and dying, into thy hands, O Lord. I have been often thinking in my mind on long eternity. I have been casting about my thoughts to the resurrection of the body, and immortal life of my soul; how distressful is the thought of leaping into the dark, I know not whether, much more is the fear of utter and eternal darkness. But I know of a relief from this fear: I flee unto Christ, as in distress, not seeing where to be safe another way. 'Tis a thing worthy of him, and of his god-like goodness, to be a refuge for perishing souls. And hence I commit my soul into his hands, and my body too, and shall take them up again with advantage; for I know in whom I have believed; I know his faithfulness, and I know his all-sufficiency; and I am persuaded he will keep the trust committed to him; and hence I willingly resign all to his kind disposal.

Lord, increase my faith! *I believe, Lord help my unbelief.* May I ever fix my heart and rely on thee as the Lord my righteousness, and look for salvation only at thy hands. Through grace, I'll roll my soul on the Lord, give up myself to him, venture my all in his hands, and throw myself at his feet, accept

except him in all points, and submit to all his terms: that I lived less by sense, and more by faith! did make it my daily business and daily delight, by faith and patience to inherit the promises; did I value them as my richest treasure, and live on them as mine own goods; did I esteem them as my surest property and sweetest possession, and daily made use of them to answer my daily occasions; had I such a constant lively sight of the things unseen and eternal, that are within the veil, as raises my heart above the world and fortifies my soul against all the impressions of sensible objects, and overcomes all worldly lusts: how chearfully might I entertain the summons of death? I believe, help my unbelief.

I have not walked to and fro in the upper regions: I have not with *Paul* been caught up into the third heavens, and seen the ineffable glory. I have not with *Daniel*, seen the ancient of days sitting, with thousand thousands ministering unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before him. I have not seen that fair and glorious company that stand about the throne, with the Lamb in the midst of them: nor have I heard these heavenly voices that are singing the song of *Moses* and the Lamb, and, with the most melodious notes, are praising and saying *Hallelujah*. But cannot I take his word for it that cannot lie, that the regions of glory are good lands and pleasant lands. I hear something of them in general descriptions. I know not the full significant meaning of these accounts of them, but sure I am they have a great meaning, since the Amen, the faithful and true witness, hath said, and so he will do it; he will accomplish what he hath promised, in its utmost extent: *Tho' eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath laid up for his people*

I'll not be like *Ishmael*, content to be put off with
small

small gifts, but, like *Isaac*, I'll wait for the inheritance; that, when death attacks me, I may be able to say, Lord, thou knowest I never intended to have my portion in this life; I despise the treasures of this world, in comparison of the heavenly inheritance.

MEDITATION XIII.

The strong and immutable foundations on which faith may build and plead, raises a humble soul into a high pitch of confidence and comfort, against the slavish fear of death and hell.

AS the eternal King is not swayed but by considerations of eternal reason, so the grace of faith hath eternal grounds to go upon. As it can plead the promises, so also the very nature and perfections of God. And to be sure arguments of this kind are of all other the strongest and surest. Hence may an exercised soul utter itself to the Lord, in this manner:

In all humility, I beg leave to represent to thee, O Lord, that it would be a great act of mercy to pity and save the like of me. The less worth I have, the more God like mercy will appear in helping me. Is it not proclaimed of thee, as thy name and thy glory, that *thou art the Lord God, merciful and gracious, that pardoneth iniquity, transgression and sin?* And is not thy solemn protestation on record, that *thou takes no pleasure in the death of sinners, but pawns thy very life and being that thou wouldst rather they should turn and live?* And, blessed Lord, this is all in thine own hand, since a day of thy power can make a dead soul live, and live eternally.

Tis

'Tis true, there is a forfeiture on my side; but the mercy that is infinite, and the grace that is boundless, cannot be bound up by any forfeiture of man's.

Behold I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes! Lord, would it not be an act of power in thee to forgive, subdue and do away my mighty transgressions and manifold sins? Who can forgive sin but God? Who can create a new heart and a new spirit but God? O let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, the Lord is long-suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression!

Lord, I'll creep near the footstool of thy throne, and further represent to the majesty of heaven, that it would not be a thing unworthy of thy divine wisdom to step in for my relief, when all refuge faileth. Thou uses to makes man's extremity thy opportunity of succouring him. And it has been the old way of all thy servants, when they knew not what to do, to have their eyes toward thee. And when they had nothing to look to in themselves or in the creature, but what caused terror in the land of the living; yet from the ends of the earth they have looked to thee and were saved. *Our fathers trusted in thee, and were delivered.* Thou art the same God still, and a sure hope still.

Lord be not angry with me if I yet speak. O God, the great and terrible God, when I beg deliverance from death, and from going down into the pit whence there is no redemption; I beg for nothing, but what as 'tis suitable to thy mercy, wisdom and power to grant, so also it is consistent with thy justice; there being a perfect satisfaction and righteousness offered to thee, and made for this very purpose, to be imputed to man, and communicate to him, sinful as he is. And here above all things in the world I desire to be found in Christ, renouncing all confidence in
my

my own righteousness, and seeking shelter only in the righteousness of God by faith, my righteousness every way sufficient to answer the demands of justice, and to deliver me for ever from my judge. And so I supplicate for nothing but what is according to thine own excellent constitution, founded on the eternal righteousness of thine own Son, thou hast promised to request any thing of thee, or plead for any thing at thy hand, but what thou canst find cause in thyself to give. But Lord, thou canst find cause in thyself, find cause I pray thee, from all thine attributes and excellencies, to ransom my poor soul from hell and death.

Will thou not, O Lord, remember and thine desire to the work of thine own hands? What profit would there be in my blood? Can the dead praise thee, as I desire to do this day, and through thy bloodless eternity? Certainly man's make was not man with of mere sovereignty, as if thou couldst take pleasure first in making creatures, and then in punishing them again; but as in manifold wisdom thou hast done them all, so thou hast made none of thy work vain, much less man, one of the chief pieces of thy greatest contrivance.

It was fit indeed, and the sacred rights of the Deity required it, that impenitent, unbelieving and ungodly sinners should be made monuments of justice. This is necessary for the honour of God's government, and the giving a lovely and grateful idea of him to all that wish well to his being and glory: for what kind of government would it be, if the partition-wall were taken down between heaven and hell, and no distinction was made or kept up between saints and sinners. But yet 'tis not punishing but pardoning that is God's great work, and brings the greatest revenue of glory to him. And since thou

saying

Living of a soul is thy great work, Lord, do what becomes thy greatness and glory!

How wonderful is the condescension of Divine goodness! that a poor humble soul may thus plead with his Maker, and make his supplication to his Judge; and that he may fill his mouth with such arguments and such pleas of faith, so strong and sure, that they can stand the mock of all temptations to unbelief, to the begetting in him a lively hope of an immortal happy life!

But let it be minded, that 'tis only the contrite broken hearted sinner, that thirsteth after righteousness and believes, that either will or can rise up to such a humble confidence in God. 'Tis the poor in spirit, the broken in heart, the weary, heavy laden soul, the mourner, the bruised reed, who finds the pressing necessities of his spirit, and sees and sets the highest value on the offers of gospel grace, that only can or will come to such earnest, importunate and bold pleadings for the life of his soul, and find encouragement from all the divine perfections.

For tho' no conviction, no desire, no disposition in us, is our warrant or ground of believing, nor could the want of them hinder our right and interest in the grace of God in Christ, did we really intend or apply the same: and tho' it is certainly and without any limitation true, that *whoever will may take of the waters of life freely*; yet 'tis as certain in fact, that no man ever did, or ever can seek, plead, or apply the grace of God in the Redeemer, without he see his need of it, and unless he prize it.

And O! how satisfying is it that a soul once guilty, yet now believing, may remember God and be comforted, and make use of such arguments, not only in all the despondency and fears of his life, but also in death's dark vale! Why, if the Lord, may he say, hath implanted the seeds and principles of eternal

life in my soul, will he after this leave me in the hands and under the power of death? no, this may not be thought of him. It would seem to reflect on the glory of his power, as if he had attempted some great thing about me, but death comes in and robs him of his design.

And after all that the Lord hath wrought for me and in me, even a certain elevation of spirit to himself, and earnest breathing after him, and a restlessness of soul till I find him; if after all, he should leave me at death, and not carry me safely through that port, how could this be to the glory of his wisdom? Might it not cast up such a misrepresentation of God, as if all difficulties had not been seen and considered, when he first looked after that soul, and began to do it good?

Again, God is wont, as being a God like thing in him, to delight in acts of goodness to his people while living. 'Tis for his glory then to carry his people safely through death into the heavenly Canaan. And in this I hope I shall be confident, and not fear when I walk through that dark valley.

O! blessed be the Lord, that a poor distressed soul has such strong and sure grounds of hope to go upon, as the taking hold of all the divine attributes, and what concerns their glory. And this is indeed faith's wrestling with God, and not letting him go till he bless us: for then do we in a proper sense take hold of God, when we take hold of his attributes, and refuse to let them go without their blessing.

MEDITATION XIV.

A daily mortifying of Sin and crucifying of the World, is absolutely necessary to make dying comfortable.

SHOULD any sin be regarded, or any lust ly supported in the heart; if any one idol be there loved

loved and entertained, what but clouds of terror can overcast that soul in a dying hour? Can he find comfort in dying, whose soul is so miserably depraved and distempered, as that heaven itself cannot please or comfort him? There is nothing that can be satisfying in death but this, that 'tis letting a soul go forth out of a dark, impure and nasty prison, into the pure, holy and lightsome regions of glory. But if it is tainted with a prevailing love to its lusts, which it would rather satisfy, what can it find entertaining and satisfying, even in the thoughts and views of heaven? Much more shall that soul find trouble and uneasiness of mind in thinking that death shall eternally bereave it of all that it most fondly loves.

[12] The like may be said of earthly-mindedness. Does the heart cleave to earth? Does a man's greatest happiness lie in pleasing his imagination with the fond expectations of thriving in the world? No wonder it is fore against his will to die, and that he mightily regrets it, as being a chasing him out of the world, and a plucking him from his dwelling. The very best side of death cannot content or please the earthly, covetous mind. The best thing death can do, is to admit the soul to heaven; but such would rather have earth; and let them have a long possession of earth, they'll let any take heaven who will.

[13] Is a soul sunk in sense, and buried as it were in earth? Doth nothing but earth, and what pertains to earth, please and entertain it? Do nothing but worldly and carnal appetites rule it? Then death is and must be looked upon as the utter undoing of such a man; and he'll be ready to say, O death, by spoiling me of my body thou hast stript me naked of all that's dear and comfortable; and what can thou do more! Yes, wretched and ungodly sinners, death can do more than all this; it can not only bereave thee of earth, but also send thee to hell, where

thou shalt not find any thing either to cool thy lust, or cool the tip of thy tongue tormented in endless flames.

But yet I say, were there nothing in death but a shutting a man's eyes upon this world, and a sending his spirit away from his body, this cannot but be terrible enough to a soul that is sensualized, to a soul that broods only upon matter, and can discern and favour nothing but what is sensitive and earthly. Such a soul never had any relish but in corporeal delights, and death deprives it of all this utterly and finally. And hence such a man, if he dare but think of it, cannot but be filled with extreme aversion to dying, and with terror at the thoughts thereof.

And even a soul that has the principles of the spiritual life in it, should it grow more remiss and careless in the work of mortification, and suffer the heart to grow bold and venturous in admitting of sinful thoughts; or if it turn to have a less dislike of sin, or if some great breach should fall out between God and that soul; as guilt will soon bring bondage upon the spirit of a man through fear of death, so there will be less delight in God, and a greater dread of him in the soul. And when a soul through its carnality comes once to disaffect God, or to find little or no delight in being near him, then death which brings the soul into his immediate presence, will be far from appearing comfortable.

On the other hand, if we are enabled, through grace, to live above all carnal gratifications, and learn to despise all sensual delights; if we mortify the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof; if that is most pleasant to us that is most pleasant to the soul, and if that is most pleasant to the soul that is most conform to the image of God and agreeable to his will; if we are spiritually minded, renouncing all excessive affection, and excessive care about frail and earthly things,

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things; if our hearts are up and down, not mainly as we thrive or come short in the world, but as we grow or come short in the grace of God; if we set our affections on things above, trampling upon the world and all its pageantry, in comparison of Christ; if we live like immortal souls, daily accustoming ourselves to such work and exercises as are proper and entertaining to spirits: then death can be no loss but gain to such a soul. Why, it disentangles it from the lumber of its flesh, and the incumbrance of earth, and lets it go free in the spacious regions of light, life, joy and bliss that are above.

This meditation, like the pillar of fire in the wilderness, has a light side to *Israelites* and a dark side to *Egyptians*. To the worldly and wicked it speaks nothing but what may cause terror in the land of the living, and much more in the dark and horrid valley of death. But can a soul say, that it renounces its lusts and vanities, that it prefers a holy, humble, mortified life, to all the pleasures of sin; that 'tis turning itself daily to God, and seasonably exercising all those graces that directly terminate on the blessed Jesus: then when death comes, O joyful day! says the man, that perfects all my wishes. I have been seeking the things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right-hand of God. I have been endeavouring, in dependence on the divine grace, to subdue my lusts and evil passions, and to mortify my inordinate desires. 'Tis a total victory that I would fain above all things attain; and this I cannot reach till by the death of the body I am parted from the body of death. And death, which does me so good a turn, cannot be hurtful, and ought not to be thought grievous.

O my soul, would not thou be perfectly holy, perfectly freed from sin? 'tis only at death the spirits of just men are made perfect; thou hast not attain-

ed, and art far from being already perfect, but dost thou not see perfection just on the other side of death? and dost thou not follow after it, and art content even to go through death, that thou mayest reach this prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus?

Dost a man prefer earth to heaven, and chuse a life of sense before a life of faith: then all is darkness, if the sun shine no more at all on him, and the moon refuse her light, and the stars rise no more at all on him for ever; and death in every shape of it must appear as the most terrible thing in nature.

But dost thou prefer heaven to earth, and a life of faith and holiness to a life of sense? Then thou wilt think, that the light of God's countenance, and a sight of the Mediator's glory, is by far more bright and glorious, than the light of the sun, moon and stars; and that angels who stand before the throne of God, and contemplate his glory, are far more happy than souls bowed down to earth, and digging there like moles in clay: and then death will appear, not with a grim, but with an amiable countenance, as that which frees the soul from an earthly tincture and from earthly entanglements, and sends thee away, to live, breathe, and joy in the pure and serene air of glory.

O my soul, wouldst thou indeed rather be above, seeing, loving, admiring, imitating, adoring and praising the infinitely amiable and adorable excellencies of God and of his Christ, the great *Immanuel*; than down here below, sinning, caring, vexing, toiling, fighting and groaning? Let this reconcile thee to death, and make the thought of it easy and pleasant, as being the last scene of thy suffering, fighting, groaning, panting, and thy final entrance into joying, singing, triumphing and praising for ever.

MEDITATION XV.

All the Graces and Exercises peculiar to a serious Christian, are such a Preparation of Heaven and a Foretaste of its Happiness, as greatly solaceth him in the Views of Death.

Nothing can be a preparation for heaven, but what is an initial participation of these very things, wherein its glory and happiness consists. For nothing but what is heavenly can form the mind to a suitableness for heaven. And a soul so heavenly exercised may be sure of heaven, by this good token, that he is already in it, heaven is come down to him, the kingdom of God is within him.

Doth the grace of love turn off the mind from all sensual, earthly and carnal delights? Doth it turn the eyes of the soul to God, to Christ, to the delightful contemplation of the glorious excellencies of God, and the blessed Redeemer? This is a heaven begun in the soul. For all in the upper world stand about the throne of God and the Lamb, and see his and his Father's glory, to their eternal joy and rapture.

Is there a profound veneration of God? Hath the soul got such a sight of God and Christ, as takes down its pride, presumption and irreverence of spirit, and makes it awfully to adore the majesty of God, and humbly to bow to his authority? This is a beginning of heaven's work. For what do the angels mean by covering their faces before the Lord? And what do all in heaven mean by their casting down their crowns before the Lamb, and him that sits on the throne; but that with awful composure, humility and veneration of soul, they adore the divine majesty and glory?

Do we stoop low, and think we can never stoop

low enough before the throne of God? Do we own that we are nothing, yea, less than nothing before the Lord and the glory of his power? Are we humbly resigned to the divine will, and lose as it were our own wills in the will of God? Do we above all things wish well to the being and happiness of God, and count upon nothing as our final and consummate happiness, but what lies in promoting his glory, and in being pleased with his will? This also is a bit of heaven in the soul. For so do the inhabitants of that land. *Thou art worthy, say they, O Lord, to receive glory, honour and power, for thou hast created all things: and for thy sake we are and were created,* i. e. that we are here, or that we are at all, 'tis even so, because 'tis thy pleasure, for whatever pleased thee, that thou hast done in heaven and in earth.

When the gracious soul falls down before the Lord, in the humble and pleasant admiration of redeeming love. When he cannot forget his Redeemer for what he hath undertaken and done for man. When his mind is swallowed up in such suspendious grace, and is like to be lost in the mystery. When he begins to speak of a height, of a depth, of a length of love, the knowledge of which is above knowledge. This is a heaven in the soul. For are not all there in like manner affected? Do not there the four and twenty elders, fall down before the Lamb, and sing a new song, and say, *Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God, by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation: Yea a great company, which no man can number, stand before the Lamb, clothed in white robes and palms in their hands, crying with a loud voice, Salvation unto our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. All the angels also cry, Worthy is the Lamb to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.* Does

Does the believer find a lively vigour of spirit in the things of God? Is he sensible of a vital strength enabling his soul to cleave unto the Lord, so that holiness becomes a second nature to him? Are the efforts of his soul to follow the Lord so strong, as to stand out against the impressions of sense, and bear down all oppositions to the contrary? This is the beginning of that eternal life, which is the enjoyment of heaven. Were religion only a mechanic thing, or were it only a lifeless and superficial form, then it could have no connexion with heaven: much less could the one be a beginning or part of the other. But when it has in it a vital, soul-transforming power, this is to begin heaven. Heaven is called life eternal, because there is a free self-activity in good, and a vigorous active enjoyment, together with a consciousness of their perfect happy state. There their faculties shall act to their uttermost on objects at once sufficient to gratify them and supply them with immortal vigour. There the powers of their soul shall be no more benumbed with a drowsy body, nor dulled with heavy organs, but the soul shall be at a perfect active liberty in a perfect way. And wherein will the eternal blessed life above lie, but in the vigorous actings of perfected faculties on a perfect and eternal good.

Doth the gracious soul find in himself strong desires for more and more conformity to God and communion with him? Doth he earnestly and resolutely desire all the grace, all the holiness, all the knowledge of God, and all the likeness and nearness to him that's possible? This looks very like heaven. For we have reason to think more enlarged desires for more discoveries of God, will subsist for ever in glory. For who can think that any created spirit can take in all of God at the first glance? Or that a being infinite and boundless in all excellencies, may not discover

discover more and more of himself endlessly and eternally? Could that spirit be in a good case that would once say, it had seen and enjoyed enough of God, and desired no more of him? When men and angels can never dive so deep into the abyss of his infinite perfections, but they may dive more, see more, and be ravished more, and through all eternity may be changing from glory to more glory. 'Tis owned, there are gradual differences of glory with respect to different persons, and why not also with respect to the same person, when the infinite and inexhaustible fulness of the Deity is the beautifying object.

If there is a holy zeal and ardour of spirit in serving the Lord. If we stand not idle in the Lord's vineyard, nor do his work negligently, but are fervent in spirit serving the Lord. If we do his work diligently, and not with a careless listless spirit. If we do all that we can for the glory of God, the honour of our Mediator, the credit of the gospel, and the salvation of precious immortal souls; and are content to stoop to any office, even the lowest, for this end. If we consecrate our time and talents, and so ardently desire these ends, as to spare neither pains nor cost for attaining them: all this is a beginning of that work which is heaven's happiness. For there the holy ones serve not only day and night in his temple, but also they run his errands upon any other service, were it even upon earth, when he sends them. For not only *Gabriel* and *Michael* and other angels are employed in affairs done on earth, but so also are *Moses* and *Elias*, and as we have reason to think other departed saints. And when they are so sent, they are also angels, that is, they are the Lord's messengers. And is it not as consistent with the beatific vision of departed saints to be sent upon such errands, as of any other order of spirits? And as we cannot but think they would be as prone to help

help us, so also that it should be as congruous to employ them, especially when 'tis promised to souls departing in the Lord, that *they shall be as the angels in heaven.*

If our spirits are elevated above the world and all its vanities. If we mind we have souls, and do nothing unworthy of them. If we use them well, and carry ourselves, not like a herd of animals, but like a tribe of immortal spirits, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life. If we suffer neither the frowns nor the flatteries of this world to hinder us in an earnest pursuit of things unseen and eternal. This is to be half in heaven, even while in the body. For in these blessed regions, they are there in their high places. *They are clothed as with the sun, and have the moon under their feet; and worldly amusements or affrightments can no more discompose or shake them, than the blustering winds or a boisterous ocean can make the stars to tremble.*

Do we find a pleasure in mentioning the name of the Lord, and talking to the glory of his perfections? Are we full of the sense of his mercy and goodness, and high in his praises? Do we extol him who dwells in light, and is covered with majesty and glory as with a garment; him who rides on the heavens by his name JAH: him who though his throne is in heaven, yet hath respect to the humble and lowly in spirit: him who pardoneth: him who sanctifieth: him who glorifieth? Do we by faith behold him, by love cleave to him, and then break forth into the hearty and cheerful praises of all his excellencies? This is a beginning of heaven, even on earth. 'Tis an anticipating the work of heaven; where there is a voice of much people, saying, *Allelujah, salvation and honour, and glory and power, be to the Lord our God: where their walls are salvation, and their gates*

gates praise, because their sun shall no more go down on them, and the days of their mourning are ended.

When the Spirit of God witnesseth with the spirits of believers, that they are the children of God; when the joy of the holy Ghost is shed abroad in their hearts; when this day dawns on their souls, and the joy of the Lord is their strength; when, in the joy of their hearts, they can say, *This is the Lord, we have waited on him; this is our God; and he will save us, and we will be glad and rejoice in him: this is a heaven under the heavens; 'tis a wass of the pure and serene air of glory, or a drop of the pure rivers of life, clear as crystal, that proceed from the throne of God and the Lamb.* 'Tis an entering of the soul into that fulness of joy, and these rivers of pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore.

And whoever are so divinely qualified with such heavenly qualities, need little to be afraid of dying: since, after they have done the will of God, and served their generation, they will seasonably fall asleep, and come to their graves like a shock of corn fully ripe.

'Tis a thought, this that at once detects and confounds the presumptuous pretensions of hypocrites, and ascertains the hopes of all true believers.

How can these be fit for heaven, or capable for its happiness, who cannot delight in God; when the height of heaven's glory lies in contemplating with pleasure his unveiled face? Can these be fit for the enjoyments of heaven, who through the pride of their hearts will not bow unto God; nor respect his majesty; when the highest angels, cherubims and seraphims, are so full of an awful veneration and adoration of his infinite excellencies? Are these fit to join with the heavenly company, who, being senseless of their sin and misery, never to this day saw any great

great need of Christ, to value and prize grace; when all the corners of heaven ring with the praises of the Lamb, and of him that sits on the throne? What could they do in heaven, who have little or no business with God, and have few or no errands at the throne of grace; when all in heaven live eternally in immediate dependence on the great original of their being and bliss, and widen and expand all their powers to receive constant vital communications from his fulness? Are they fit for the business of heaven, who think there needs not much ado in serving the Lord, but that a few cold listless duties may do the business; when these in heaven serve him day and night in his temple? Or are these fit, who, tho' they do much in external duties, yet all is but a dead carcase, without a new nature, or a vital principle within to animate the same, when holiness to the Lord is just heaven's element, the life they live, the air they breathe, and the joy they enjoy?

On the other hand, O how sure and how sweet is the hope of a gracious soul! blessed Lord, may he say, when I go out of this world into the next, I do not go unto a world altogether unknown, nor unto a way of living I have no manner of experience of: for, through thy rich and free grace, I have that already begun in me, the perfection of which will be the very heaven of heavens. My hopes then are not mockeries and delusions: I am carried on to heaven by sure steps, and in a way that is of the same kind with it, and hence I cannot miss my journey's end. I have some experience of meditating on God here, loving God and the blessed Jesus here, delighting in him here, conforming to him here, and serving him here; and 'tis a perfect degree of all this I would be at, and I wait for the same, as my heaven, which only death can set me into.

MEDITATION XVI.

The very Hope of Heaven is such a Pledge and Security of the Possession thereof, as gives great Comfort in dying.

THERE are few but what talk of a hope of heaven; when yet 'tis evident, of all unregenerate and ungodly souls, that whatever they say of their hope of heaven, they are only taught to speak some words, without any meaning at all, or with a meaning that's opposite to the true state of the blessed: but as for heaven itself, it is not so much as desired, far less hoped for. The intimate language of their souls is, 'tis good to be here, let us build our nest here: and good comfort it would be to tell them, that this night they would be with Christ in paradise; much less would it be a compliment to wish them there so soon.

All unsanctified souls, whatever confused notion they may have of heaven in general, as a pleasant or excellent place, yet there is nothing in it particular that suits their depraved taste, and it appears but as a disproportional happiness to them, as containing enjoyments so pure, that their carnal minds cannot feel them; and so thin, that their gross imagination knows not what to make of them. So that no wicked man ever desires or hopes for the happiness of heaven, as will easily appear.

Heaven is a fuller measure and degree of the knowledge of God and Christ, where we shall see God as he is, and know him, as we are known of him. And doth he hope for this, who saith unto God, depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of the Most High; and who hath not God in all his thoughts, though he is the most delectable object; and one would

would think it as easy to think of him as of any thing else?

Heaven is a perfect measure and degree of holiness, a perfect conformity to God, where *they behold his face in righteousness, and, being awakened, are satisfied with his likeness.* But doth any ungodly sinner hope for this? Can he hope for that perfect likeness to God in heaven, who hates the imperfect image of him on earth? Or can he hope to have holiness perfected, who cannot endure that it should begin?

Heaven is a state of perfect communion with the Father and the Son; where *they are before the throne of God, and he that sits on the throne shall dwell among them.* And can he hope for this, who hath no delight in the Almighty, but disaffects his presence, and wearies in it, and to whom an appearance of God would be the most terrible thing in the world?

Heaven is a state of perfect eminent service. The throne of God and of the Lamb is in it, and there *his servants serve him, and have his name in their forehead.* And can he hope for this, who hath neither heart nor hand in the service of God, and seldom or never saith, *Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?*

'Tis evident then, that all unconverted sinners have not only no grounds for any hope of heaven, but also they do not hope for the same at all. They are so far from hoping for it, or desiring it, that they grudge its being so pure a region, as that they cannot live or breathe therein. They are for a happiness according to their own minds, and the complexion of their own hearts: but their minds and hearts being alienated from God, heaven is not it, and they are discontented they cannot find an eternal happiness without God.

And is this the inward sense of an unregenerate soul,

soul, as 'tis evidently the case of every one of them. Suffer me to expostulate a little with thee, and lament thy wretched case with a drop of tears!

"Why art thou unwilling to be saved? Why thinkest thou so little of the glory of God and of the Lamb? Why despisest thou all the fulness of the Deity? Are all the consolations of God small things to thee? Why un-desirous of eternal blessedness? What hurt can an eternal happiness do unto thee? What can dissatisfy thee at the presence of a heavenly father and loving Redeemer? Why art thou averse to a sight of the father's face, and the face of that fair one who is the brightness of his father's glory, and the countenance of angels and glorified spirits, these sons of the morning? What's the mighty loss thou canst sustain, in being saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation? Is Christ thine enemy because he would be thy Saviour? What hurt can it do thee to be drinking in eternally of the pure rivers of life that flow from the throne of God and the Lamb?"

Art thou come to a resolution of giving God, and Christ, and heaven, an eternal farewell? Art thou determined in thy mind never to have more to do with them? This thou dardest not resolve on, but tremblest to think on it. Why then dardest thou do daily what thou dardest not, in explicit and positive terms, resolve?"

"Canst thou imagine or dream of a heaven to thyself, without having any part or portion in God, and though eternally banished from him, whose presence is the only seat of light, life, and joy, to spirits for ever? But though thou should fly unto hell, he is there; and there by his avenging power; where visions thou shalt have indeed, but not of God, and of the light of his countenance; but visions thou shalt have of horrible darkness and frightful devils.

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And is there as much satisfaction in the momentary pleasures of sin, as it is sufficient to outweigh the joys of heaven, or to ease the damned spirit in the pylon and torment of hell?

O wretched, O miserable sinner, repent of this thy wickedness, and cry unto Almighty God, that thy heart may be changed. Lie at the footstool of his throne, and upon the bended knees of thy soul, beseech him earnestly and incessantly, that he would incline such a perverse heart to him. Be diligent in the use of all means. Sin up thyself, roll thy soul on thy Redeemer for his converting and pardoning grace. In the sense of thy weakness and inability, make an essay to believe: and rather spend days, months and years in reiterated attempts this way, than live without God, without Christ, and without hope in this world.

On the other hand, they that through grace do hope for heaven, may be sure of the same, and have a spring of joy flowing in their souls, living and dying.

What we hope for we apprehend to be good, and hence what our hope terminates upon, as our full and final happiness, that has our highest esteem. And certain it is, that to hope for heaven as our highest perfection and happiness, without esteeming it, is a contradiction in the nature of the thing. So that the hope of an everlasting happiness, in heaven includes in it a prizing the glory and joys of heaven above all the world. Hence were there an eternity on earth, and an eternal confluence of earthly things offered on the one hand, and an eternal enjoyment of Jehovah and the Lamb on the other, the soul would readily say, *Whom have I in heaven but thee, O Lord; and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee.*

And now when the soul despises the mean vile things of this world, in comparison of heaven and its glory; when it sets the highest value on the highest good; when it finds its highest esteem is set on what is eternally worthy, and which, though we had the refined capacities of angels, outweighs our highest esteem: O the secret content and intimate joy of this! a joy which death cannot kill, nor the grave bury, but which riseth highest when one is passing through that dark valley!

Again, we cannot hope for any thing which we do not desire; the object of hope being something that is desirable. And if it be our chief good and supreme happiness that is the object of our hope, if it be not desired above all things, it is not hoped for. So that when a man hopes for heaven, his desires are terminate upon it; and they are not faint and sluggish desires, but they are lively, vigorous and victorious, and in some measure proportioned to its excellency that's superior to all other enjoyments.

And O how pleasing and solacing is the state of that soul, whose desires are so well directed! desire and joy are so near a kin, that desire may be called joy begun, and joy may be called desire continued. The more joy in the Lord, the more desire towards him; which again makes all the ways pleasant, whereby the soul reaches near him. Let me go any way, says the soul in warm desire to God, though through fire and water, through a thousand dangers, nay even through the shadows of death, that I may come unto his seat.

And again, what a man hopes for, he endeavours to obtain. As no man hopes for what he does not value, or does not desire, so as little for what he is not at pains to attain. And hence wherever there is any hope of heaven, it sets on the soul in all industrious endeavours to attain it. And this is the spring that sets

sets all the wheels of the soul a-going, from its first conversion to God, till its entrance to glory.

Would the plowman plow or sow, if he had not the hopes of a harvest? Would the merchant go about so busily, and venture so far, if he had not hopes of gain and of safety? As little would the Christian be at so much pains in meditating, praying, fasting, watching, wrestling, suffering, and obeying, if he were not animate with the lively hope of glory.

And Oh how pleasant a work is this, both in itself and in its review! if it should be asked a man, what is thy main business? What dost thou chiefly labour at? How satisfying is it, if he be able to give this answer, I am chiefly aiming at immortality and eternal life, I press towards this as my mark; I am daily fitting up my soul for the pure mansions of glory. 'Tis true, death lies in the way, but I would rather chuse to pass through that path, dark as it is, than come short of the glory that is to be revealed: yea, how ill were it for me if I did not die, and at length win home to my father's house.

O merciful father, may a believer here say, I beg thy leave to represent as before thee what I mean, when I speak of my hope of heaven.

I find a thick darkness overshadowing my mind, so that 'tis but very little I can see of God, of Christ, or of the excellency of the intellectual world. And when I am revived with the hopes of glory, 'tis because of a prospect I have of seeing more of the glory of God, and the glory of *Immanuel*; particularly more of his love; what made God to become man; why the prince of life died; why he was at such cost to save a lost world, and what will be the final upshot of such an amazing undertaking? And this is the heaven I desire and hope for.

I sadly regret it, that after the many purposes, vows and strivings against sin, and many deep groans,

and earnest cries and wrestlings, at the throne of grace, for a full victory, and after all the wounds it has received by hatred, by strong resolves, by watching and tender caution that yet there is much strength and life in sin. This lies heavy on my soul, this keeps me groaning and crying, *Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death*, but hearing there is at length a full and complete redemption from sin, when no pollution shall any more estrange me from God, nor the power of corruption any more vex me, this is my heaven. This is the heaven I hope for; and though 'tis on the other side of death, yet I'll with patience and desire wait for it.

O blessed Lord! if I know myself, if my heart do not deceive me, the predominant and habitual state thereof is to make thee my chief joy. I would rather renounce my part and life in the world, than quit my claim to the excellent Redeemer. But, alas! what coldness is there many a time in my love! what sad defects and intermissions in the acts and expressions thereof! my heart breaks within me, that I have so little love to thee, and I loath myself, that ever I should have entertained other lovers. And hearing of a state attainable, where perfect love to thee will cast out all slavish fear, and where they shall even dwell in love, and in God who is love; this is the heaven I would be in, and which I desire and hope for above all things.

When I have been essaying to serve thee my master and Lord, weakly as I could, how much am I humbled under the sense of my manifold defects! O holy one of Israel, the utmost I can do is neither enough, nor good enough for thy pure eyes. How low and drooping is the life I live here in the flesh! and how dull and spiritless are my devotions! 'tis above, in yonder place, where thy servants serve thee in another

other manner, and to better purpose: 'Tis there they do thy will with immortal vigour, zeal and transport. 'Tis such a heaven as this that I would be at, and live in the hope of. I am sensible of the many lamentable excursions of my mind from God, and the precious Saviour. How often is my heart tossed hither and thither by the many vanities of this world! what cleaving is there to the world! what close attachment to the objects of sense! what sad distance from God! I lament after the Lord! I sigh, I groan, I cry for his presence; and sometimes that now I have got near him, but how soon does the heart turn off again! only 'tis relieving to hear of an eternal dwelling in the presence of the great king, and of a long eternity, wherein ransomed souls shall be ever with their Lord. And 'tis this nearness to God, this perfect communion with him that is my heaven. I hope for it above all things, as my heaven or heavens. 'Tis out of sight indeed, but hope that is seen is not hope; and if I hope for what I see not, then will I with patience wait for it. And, O blessed Lord, all the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come, and then thou shalt call, and I will answer thee, for thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine own hands.

MEDITATION XVII.

A true benevolent temper, including in it all other social virtues, is a necessary qualification for heaven's happiness, and for comfort in Death.

THE law of love rules in the heavens, and makes all therein happy. There is no more any question there, what is the chief good, God or the creature; but they see God to be loveliness and love,

and they take up a stated dwelling in him, by perfect and uninterrupted love: and from this reflects a love to every thing that hath a stamp of God upon it, and the more perfect the impression is, the stronger is their love. And justice between one and another is a branch of this, and there would remain nothing of justice, but the shadow and the name thereof, if it were not ingrafted in the stock of love.

For as 'tis the most deeply fundamental law of the intellectual world, to be most addicted to God, the father, the fulness, and felicity of spirits; so also the fundamental law of all social duties is love to one another. And this universal love rules the whole kingdom of heaven.

Hence, as the happy spirits above are a very devout people, having their minds fixed on God, and never wandering from a sight of him; for even when they are ranging through the world, they keep in sight of God, and stand in his presence: so also they are very sociable. There are none of them sour and morose, none of them peevish and captious, There are no cross interests or factions among them. There is nothing but perfect love and peace. And hence they are described as delighting in one another's company and converse, as may be seen in several passages of the book of the *Revelations*.

'Tis the perfect benevolence that reigns in heaven that makes them all so free and open-hearted. How frankly do they answer St. John's questions about the martyrs, *Rev. vii.* about the person who was to open the book, &c. How often are they recounting, and telling to one another, the wondrous steps of the divine providence, in all the several revolutions in kingdoms and churches, whether in a way of mercy or judgment! they have no separate interest, and need not be upon the reserve.

'Tis this also that makes them be so public spirited.

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not only in every thing that relates to the glory of God, and honour of the great Mediator; but also in what concerns the good and happiness of their fellow-creatures, and particularly of man. The angels these morning stars, sang together: these sons of God shouted for joy, for the making of this earth, and the making of man therein. And as they were well pleased with man's creation, so no less were they delighted with his redemption. With what triumph did a great heavenly host of angels celebrate the descent of our Lord from heaven to earth to save us! *Glory, say they, to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will unto men.* So we find in the *Revelation* all the heavens ringing with praises and songs, upon the Lord's remarkable deliverances given to his church and people.

How serviceable are they all in heaven to one another, and how well affected! they cry to one another, *Praise our God, all ye saints, hallelujah!* Which, as it expresses their high esteem of God, as being infinitely more praise-worthy, than they can find praises for, and as it shews their desire to see him praised more and more; so also it shews a fervent desire of finding all in heaven employed in the best exercises, and in the best manner; and how serviceable are they also to us on earth! how well affected are these celestial spirits to us! they make it their very business to be helpful to these who shall be heirs of salvation. There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, if but one sinner be converted. From all which we may see the sweet and benign disposition of all the inhabitants of glory.

And 'tis as evident, that unless love, peace, meekness, gentleness, benignity, goodness, charity and justice govern our hearts and lives, we have nothing of the temper that reigns in heaven, and fits us for that kingdom.

No pride, no passion, no wrath, no hatred, no envy, no malice, no strife, no evil-speaking, no injustice and no selfishness can have place in the pure, placid heavenly regions. No canker'd or ill natur'd passions can dwell in the pure and serene breasts of the inhabitants of these lands. All these are the natives of hell, the smoke of the bottomless pit, the devil's proper sin, and the subties that torment him.

Should a man then allow himself to be selfish, fraudulent, malicious, revengeful, proud, fretful, envious, censorious, and merciless; how can he dwell in heaven, which is the region of light, love and peace? How can he make up one society with the angels, who is of a temper so contrary to theirs?

The glorious angels and glorified saints are full of benignity, love, and kind propensions; and should our spirits be full of hatred, ill-will, spite and rancour, and so have the proper character of malignant spirits: how can those and these spirits cement together in one community?

Likecats begets acquaintance, and acquaintance pleasure and delight: but can two walk together, except they be agreed? How strange would it appear to all the heavenly inhabitants, if such were admitted among them, who are without love, goodness, benignity, and so are aliens to God, who is original love; aliens to Christ, who is love incarnate; and aliens to the commonwealth of heaven, who dwell in the land of love, yea dwell in love itself as their proper element.

Happy that soul who mortifies pride, envy, and all evil passions and affections, and puts on bowels of mercy, kindness, compassion, and good will to all men: that, from a heart full of affection to mankind, is ready to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick; and who forgives the injurious, delights in the good, pities the bad, compassionates every one in

in all their miseries, and supplies their necessities. This is a temper like theirs in heaven.

O may this be the temper and disposition of my soul: may I have always an honest and charitable heart: may I have grace to love them that hate me: may I forgive their ill, and requite it with good: may I mortify and repress all the impetuous motions of anger, wrath, malice, and desire of revenge: May I do good unto all men, and especially unto those that are of the household of faith: May I give every one their due, and make it my business, while I am in the world, to do all the good I can in it to every one. May it deeply affect my heart to see so many perish in my sight: some by covetousness, some by sensuality, some by pride and evil passions, some by ignorance and stupidity, some by atheism and unbelief, some by a neglect, and others by a contempt and profanation of prayer, word and sacraments. And may it be my great care, out of compassion to perishing souls, to use all the means and endeavours I can to recover them from the snare of the devil.

O blessed Lord, let no regard to self, nor inordinate affection to the world, make me say or do any thing but what is good, honest and useful. May I think nothing so good as to be constantly employed in the acts and material expressions of supreme love to God, and sincere love to all my fellow-creatures. Such a disposition is this, as 'tis a putting on the image of God; or a being merciful as our heavenly father is merciful, so 'tis an imitation of the generous benignity of angels, who have kind propensions to men and angels, and pure and affectionate love to all. 'Tis a kindness, compassion, and good will to all, from a heart full of affection to man, ready to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and who forgets not the infirm, the distressed, every one in need.

MEDITATION XVIII.

The Prospect of a glorious Resurrection of the Body dispels all the melancholy thoughts that can cast up in the Mind, about the Body's being laid down dead and ghastly in the dark and rotten Grave.

DEATH appears as an uncouth and amazing change in this respect, that it shakes the soul out of its body, which thereby becomes senseless loathsome and ghastly.

'Tis true, the soul, hath often found its body to be a very troublesome neighbour: for whereas it was made to serve, it usurps the command; and whereas the body was to minister unto the superior interest of the soul, it sets up for an interfering interest of its own, and makes demands as if it were the whole man, or at least the most considerable part of him. And hence it challenges all our time, thoughts and care, as if it were only to be minded, and as if the soul had no concern or interest to look after, or no prospect beyond the grave, or none worthy the minding.

And now the body being so great a cause, or an occasion of so much evil concupiscence, as is the burden and daily vexation of a well affected and exercised soul; the body, I say, being so much the cause why the soul in man is so much neglected, as if it were a thing so inconsiderable, in respect of the body, as not to deserve any care: hence it is that the believer often falls a-longing for deliverance from the body, and all the evil and heavy appendages thereof.

Yet, after all, he knows that the body is an essential

tial part of him, and that during the interval of separation he has lost his body. His soul is indeed happy, it enjoys all the pleasures proper and peculiar to immortal spirits, and so his main felicity is secured. But yet the man is not at the time completely and consummately happy. He wants his body. An essential part of that compound being, man, is yet in the hand of death. But here lies his comfort, his body shall be restored to him again. For tho' worms hath destroyed his body, yet it shall be so reared up again, that in his very flesh he shall see God.

The body is confined to the retired and lonely grave. 'Tis laid out of sight, and out of mind. But 'tis not in an everlasting prison. It shall be raised, and re-united to its soul again. For Christ, the prince of life, hath encountered death, and pursued it to its closest retirement: he hath vanquished death and the grave, in its own soil, and thereby sanctifies death, and sweetens the grave, and at length opens, it to all his followers. So that, as God said to *Jacob*, *Fear not to go down unto Egypt, for I will go with thee, and will bring thee up again*; so every believer may hear Christ saying to him, fear not to go down into the grave, that den of rottenness and house of corruption, for I will go with and bring thee up again.

The believer knows well enough, or may know, that his soul will go off this stage, with such principles of a vigorous, immortal, happy life, as will be a spring of eternal joy. He knows also, the sooner he gets out of this body, he reaches the sooner the main thing he would be at; he attains what he has been long praying and panting for, even the immediate presence and fruition of God, and the pure rivers of life that flow from his throne. Yet death being the effect of sin, he is loath any part of him should remain in the hands of death. He would have his
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body also a sharer of happiness, in its measure and way. God hath joined soul and body together, and what God hath joined, he is unwilling death should for ever keep asunder.

But, O believer, know for thy comfort, that there shall be a restitution of all things. And as death ransoms the soul, and makes it escape like a bird from the snare, so it shall not be able to keep down the body in the grave. Thou shalt take up thy body again with advantage. Thou shalt put off all corruption, mortality, and all principles of disorder, for ever. Thou shalt change a frail crooping body, for immortal vigour and health. Thy body, tho' sown in weakness, shall be raised in power; tho' sown in dishonour, shall be raised in glory; tho' sown a natural body, it shall be raised a spiritual body; a body altogether under the direction, and at the command of thy immortal spirit; a body that no more taints the soul with a proclivity to earthly and corporeal objects; a body that is made conform even to the glorious body of Jesus Christ.

Here a believer, in the lively exercise of faith, may sing with a humble and holy triumph of soul, *O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!* The sting of death is indeed sin, but, death, thou art over-shot in thine own bow; for, through the dying of our Redeemer, death comes to be the killing of sin and the extinction of its life: and further, by its removing us out of the reach of temptations and snares, it destroys the very existence of sin. And if this be all that death doth to the gracious soul, even to deprive him of sensible objects, and kill the fements and incentives to lust, O death thou art welcome; for a better turn cannot be done me, than to free me totally from indwelling corruption.

And, O grave where is thy victory! thou mayest indeed have a body in thy possession. And what are
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the mighty spoils in thy hand? A dead carcase, a senseless piece of clay, a lump of dead flesh, that never had either life or sense, but as it was animated by its immortal spirit: which, whenever death takes place, is out of death's reach, and which death can at no time touch, and now it hath taken its flight above all the regions where mortality dwells.

O death, 'tis only a poor senseless body, a lifeless lump of flesh, which is in thy hands; which tho' thou cover with worms, dissolve into rottenness, shiver into dust, and bury in darkness, yet it can feel nothing of all thy resentment: for when laid in the grave, tho' it hath eyes it sees not, and tho' it hath ears it hears not, neither can it smell with its nose, and so perceive nothing of all thy outrage and insults.

And how impotent is thy triumph, when 'tis only over the dead, that know nothing, and feel nothing, and not over the living. And even this body, dead as it is, senseless as it is, and shattered as it is, thou cannot keep long down in the grave. Tho' it hath neither sense nor power to make resistance, yet thou cannot detain it in thy dark territories: for the day will come, when *all that are in the grave shall hear the voice of Christ, and they that hear shall live.* As there was once a voice, *Rise up Lazarus,* so it shall be heard again, rise up patriarchs, prophets, martyrs and all believers; rise up——who of this congregation have died in the Lord, and come from the dead.

How pleasant is the prospect that a gracious soul may have, through the valley of death, upon this very account. I put off indeed, may we say, an earthly house, yet 'tis but a smoky one. How often hath the fumes of indwelling concupiscence made mine eyes to gush out with tears! I have dwelt in the body but as a very strait and narrow lodging; and hence such pressures and oppressions many a time on my

my spirit. And 'tis but a dropping cottage I am in at present : there is one defluxion after another from the weak distempered head. But nothing of all this shall be in the body I take up again, at the resurrection, when it shall be made spiritual and incorruptible, and receive an uninterrupted influence of life, health and vigorous immortality, from Christ the great head and Lord.

P A R T III.

A Contemplation of heaven ; Or, The Believer's Pisgah-sight of the HEAVENLY CANAAN.

THE believer, while he is in the body, is confined as in a prison, and at last he is released. The flesh is a dark covering to the soul, and oft imposes upon us by its beguiling images, and at length 'tis put off. Indwelling corruption holds the soul in continual conflict, and God sends death at length to put an end to all our combats, and to give a final relief and rest from trouble.

As 'tis a thing essential to a regenerate soul, to look and breathe for the things unseen and eternal, that are within the vail, so also to be daily preparing and fitting up himself for such sublime and divine enjoyments.

And there being nothing required as a direct preparation for heaven, but what is an initiate part of its happiness, hence it is, that as a believing prospect of heaven animates the Christian, in all his laborious endeavours to attain the same, so also it doth instruct us of the nature, necessity and fitness of what we are to do, in order to inherit that kingdom. Hence it is

is of the utmost importance to have the most distinct view that we can of the nature and qualities of the happiness there enjoyed. And for this we must rest in such descriptions as we find in the divine oracles, where only 'tis revealed.

MEDITATION I.

*In Heaven they see God as he is.**

THERE the holy ones have a clear intuitive knowledge of God as he is in himself, and as he shines in the glory of all his infinite perfections and excellencies.

They see him there in the glory of his *self-existence*: how he is the everlasting I A M, that is, what he is of himself, and that necessarily is; and how all creatures before him are as nothing, yea less than nothing and vanity. And hence that there is nothing in them sufficient to seduce or divert their minds from the fixed and delightful contemplation of God: Lo! 'tis now they find the significant meaning of God's being all in all.

And how ravishing will this sight be of the blessed three. How that God is not such a Deity, as did shut up himself, or dwelt in eternal solitude; but there being an eternal, infinite, delicious society among the sacred three, whether powers, persons, subsistencies or agencies, or whatever they are called, hereby there is an infinitely sweet variety in the manifestations and communications of the divine nature, to the eternal joy and rapture of angels and men.

How gloriously also will the Lord appear to his saints, in his *self-sufficiency* and *all-sufficiency*, as he is the cause of causes, and being of beings, the vast source of all the springs of nature, the fountain of being, life and blessedness, and the stay and support of

of all the creation in heaven and earth. *We give thee thanks, will they say, O Lord God almighty, which art, wast, and art to come.*

Nor will the glory of God's holiness shine with less transporting brightness. 'Tis this that is the very beauty of God's face. 'Tis a venerable and dazzling excellency. 'Tis a glory so amiable, so God-like, so ravishing as strikes all in heaven into an eternal rapture, and makes all therein infinitely and inconceivably happy. Hence, with transport and ecstasy of spirit, they cry, *Holy, holy, holy Lord God almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.*

As affecting will it be to see how greatly the Lord is exalted in the glory his power, that power of his that hath stretched out the heavens, and laid the foundation of the earth; that power that hath given life to dead souls, and hath drawn them up to heaven, tho' all the powers of darkness and gates of hell were between; that power that hath upheld weak grace, and preserved Christ's flock, tho' environed with legions of devils and lusts, and encompassed with innumerable evils. O but the right-hand of God doth valiantly, the right hand of God doth valiantly. *We give thee thanks, say they, O Lord God almighty, because thou hast taken unto thee thy great power. Rejoice ye heavens, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*

With no less transport will they see and admire the Divine Wisdom, shining so gloriously in all its draughts, councils and contrivances; when the web of providence shall be seen in all its threads; when the close and hidden connections of things shall be exposed to open view; when the manifold wisdom of God, in the beginning, progress and perfection of his Church, shall be lookt into by all the principalities and powers in heavenly places.

'Tis not till now they are in heaven, that the saints of

of God have a full sight of his myſterious and unſearchable love. Tis now they come to a clear ſenſe of that definition of God, *God is love*. Tis there they ſee, that he dwells in love, and that his throne is paved with love. The love of God is there to be ſeen, without any frown or cloud in his countenance, and without any wall. Tis not till then they can ſpeak to ſome purpoſe of the glory of the unſearchable riches of divine goodneſs and grace.

How bright and ſatisfying alſo is the view they will there have of the *faithfulneſs* of God: how he hath not been unmindful of his covenant, nor broken it, to the diſgrace of the throne of his glory, nor hath ſuffered any of their unallowed and repented of miſcarriages to break with him: and how he hath been mending them by what ſeemed to mar them: and hath been carrying on his purpoſes of mercy and goodneſs to his ſaints, by methods, which, in the days of their fleſh, they were ready to complain of as rough. The Lord hath promiſed, will they ſay, to be our God for ever and ever, and to be our guide unto death, and to lead through death into the land of uprightness: and lo! now he hath fully accompliſhed all the good words he had promiſed. And hence they ſay, *Great and marvellous are thy works; juſt and true are thy ways, O King of Saints.*

Bleſſed Lord, how little do I ſee of thee while here in the body! 'tis but a dark and at beſt but a twinkling view, which I have of my glory, and of the ſplendor of thy perfections, while in this dark tabernacle! my ſoul is pent up in its body, and, by the laws of a vital union with the ſame, 'tis ſo confined and cramped, that it cannot come to any thing in an immediate way; and the ſenſes are but diſſpectacles to look through. O! how pleaſant is the proſpect of that world, where the ſoul, needing neither door nor window to look through, nor any

material images to guess by, shall itself become all eye, become sight itself, and see every thing as it is, and see God himself as he is !

But, O blessed Lord ! tho' I cannot dive into thy essence, and search it out to perfection ; though this be infinitely transparent, and the mind is lost in the search ; and though thy glory, let out immediately, is too dazzling for mortals to bear ; yet, even in this flesh, there is a way of beholding the same, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ thy Son ; and, of all the ways of seeing thee, this is the best, being at once the most clear and most satisfying way of taking up thy divine excellencies.

O how condescending is God to mortals in Christ Jesus ! how reviving is it to behold a God incarnate ! and to see the Father in him, *who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his Father's person !*

In Christ Jesus, the great *Immanuel*, and great mediator between God and man, God is visibly seen to be love, to be love itself, goodness itself, and mercy itself !

And the divine holiness shines also very amiably in him, even to those who were guilty and polluted before. 'Tis not now, who shall stand before a holy God : but there being an acceptance of Christ's righteousness as ours, both on God's part and man's, and there being also a conferring on the believer the most excellent graces of the Spirit, whereby he is made glorious within, that soul may not only lift up its head among the holy angels, but even lift up its face to God without spot and without fear.

Yea justice itself, that terrible thing to guilty creatures, casts up in Christ the mediator, not as compassed with clouds, nor glooming with frowns, nor thundering out terrors, but, being atoned, 'tis to be seen clear, serene and accessible.

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And now also we may trust to the conduct of divine wisdom, as being employed in plots of love about us, and in gracious contrivances how to deliver us from going down to the pit where there is no redemption, and how we shall be saved with an everlasting salvation.

Hereby also we have the satisfaction of having God's power engaged for us. And what satisfaction and security is this to have an infinite power on our side, defeating all the enemies, and removing all the obstacles of our eternal happiness!

O! blessed be the Lord, that the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us! and that we behold his glory, the glory of the only begotten Son of God! and that, in seeing him, we see the Father also! Nor is the Deity any where to be seen, and to be enjoyed, so fully and so familiarly as in the great *Immanuel!* and may I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord; and be ever willing to suffer the loss of all things, and to count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him.

M E D I T A T I O N II.

*In Heaven they are like unto God *.*

A Sight of God, if clear, hath a very transforming and assimilating virtue in it. And all in heaven, beholding his face in righteousness, are for ever satisfied with his likeness.

Why are many so alienated from the life of God and altogether unlike him? Why, it is through the ignorance that is in them, and the blindness of their minds. Did we see God as he is; see him in the amiable lustre of his divine excellencies; see him as the

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* 1 John iii. 2.

most bright archetypal truth, and as the most amiable, primogenial goodness: perfect amiableness would win our hearts to him, and ravishing goodness would allure and constrain us to a conformity to him. Hence the soul that sees God as he is, cannot but be perfectly like him. And, unless the sight of the divine glory had such an assimilating virtue in it, all the light of heaven would be but a skin-deep glory, like that which shined on *Moses's* face; or only a superficial brightness, like paint on the face, while death is at the heart.

But in heaven the spirits of just men are made perfect. 'Tis there they have a perfection in holiness, in all its parts. Where there is an exactness of obedience, an uniformity and evenness in heavenly motions, a supply made to every joint, and a measure dispensed to every part: where not a grace is wanting that is necessary to perfect the soul; and where there is a coming up to the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ.

And 'tis there also they attain the perfection of degree. There is no remains or degree left of a repugnancy in them to the image and will of God: no body of sin, no indwelling corruption; no contrary principle rebels there against the better part. Nor are there any oppressing cares, loading griefs or tumultuous passions, to molest, or hurry, or divert them from their attendance on God, and dutiful homage to him. They attain the perfect composure there is in a perfect acquiescence in God, than which nothing can be conceived as coming nearer the divine felicity.

There is a likeness to God begun in the soul's conversion to him; but yet what stir and tumult is there from inbred corruption, which makes a struggle in the soul, like the strife which the twins made in *Rebekah's* womb. But in heaven they are as the angels,

angels, whose wills stand bent to the will of God indeclinably.

We strive with our hearts to raise their affections to God: and, after all, they are not so closely united to him, but that they are often opening themselves to the things of this life; which puts us upon the necessity of seeking daily to be cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. But in heaven, where there is perfect purity of heart and life, there is not one impertinent thought in the mind, nor one irregular motion in the will, nor one wrong look in the eye, nor one wrong step in all the turns of their life.

The heart of a believer is then as he would: his faculties are altogether heavenly and divine; his flesh and corruption is done away; his earthly part is become heavenly, and he cannot now but obey his God and Saviour, with unspeakably alacrity and joy of spirit.

How wonderful is it, that when, by his apostacy and rebellion, man had utterly estranged himself from God; and had made himself as unlike him as darkness is to light; as unlike him as he could, yea, as unlike as he could be: that yet, through the amazing grace and goodness of God, it should be so brought about, that man's disposition should be so far changed, as to be conform to God, resemble him, and be a partaker of the divine nature! and that at last the blessed day should come, when this likeness to God, and his blessed image, shall be altogether and for ever perfected!

A day this is that has been long looked for by the gracious soul, and it will dawn on him at last. A jubilee-day, when, with holy triumph and exaltation of spirit, the glorified saints will say and sing, No body of death now oppresses me, no lumpish flesh now cumpers me; there is no more now any ignorance of God, or averfation to him, no more any

disaffection to God, or coldness of love, no carnality of affection, or earthliness of mind, or any sinful division of the heart, between God and the creature, to seduce me from God, or cool delight in him for ever; but I shall now love, honour and serve my God, in the manner I ought and would.

And now, O heavenly Father, my earnest request is to thee, that, for the sake of the Son of thy love, thou wouldst implant in me thy likeness, repair thy defaced image in my heart and life, more and more transform my soul altogether into thy likeness. What would I not do, what would I not give, what would I not suffer, in order to be made altogether conform to thy nature and perfections? I would fain be wise and good, and holy, and just, and merciful as thou art. And as to thine other perfections which I cannot imitate, yet I would fain have something in me to correspond to them. Thou art my supreme Lord, and I would fain reverence and bow unto thy authority, and live in a humble and stated subjection to thy will. Thou hast an independent all-sufficient fulness in thyself, and I desire to see myself as nothing in thy sight, and to hold my all of life and blessedness of thee, and to live in immediate dependence on thy exuberant fulness. 'Tis a full conformity, O Lord, to thy nature, image and will that I would fain be at.

But how shall I attain it? The surest way is by looking unto, and following the example of my Lord and Saviour. 'Tis he who is the most perfect image of God, and, by being like unto him, I am like the Father also. 'Tis he that is the most perfect pattern of all divine excellencies. 'Tis he that is the very substantial image of God; an image of him not only drawn to the life, but with the life, even the life of God.

O great and good! I'll endeavour, through grace,

to copy after thy example, that in conforming to the same, I may be like unto God.

How much was the Son in prayer to his heavenly Father! I'll endeavour, according to his example, to retire much from the world, that I may be inward and conversant with God. I'll be often expressing my dependence on thee, and embrace all opportunities of having intercourse with thee.

My Lord and my God, *thou went about doing good*, both to the souls and bodies of men. O that likewise, from a heart full of pious affection to mankind, I may endeavour, as I can, to relieve them from the necessities and troubles both of their souls and bodies!

The blessed Jesus was much in *praises and thank-givings to his heavenly Father*. May I have grace likewise, above all things, to wish well to the being and glory of God, and testify a high complacency in him, and do what I can for his honour!

How *meek and lowly* was the King Jesus, when he came from *Zion* to save us; tho' he was in the form of God, he took on him the form of a servant. May I also learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart! may I brook to be despised for his sake! and may I be better pleased to have a humble, penitent, tender, meek and holy heart, than to have all the applauses and commendations of the world!

So full of *zeal* was the Son of God for the glory of his father, the honour of his house, and the eternal interests of precious souls, that his zeal did eat him up. May I likewise burn with ardent desire for the purity and power of godliness, for the glory of God, for the honour of Christ's kingdom, for the maintaining of his cause, for the setting forth of his truths, and for the salvation of lost souls! and may this desire so penetrate into my heart, and

possess my soul, as that time, strength, talents, and all may be consecrate to these ends!

O blessed Saviour, how patiently didst thou *bear the revilings, reproaches, and injurious usage of men!* When thou wast reviled, thou reviled not again. May I likewise be enabled to suffer all affronts, contempt and ill-usage in this world, with a calm composed mind, and without any regret or murmur of spirit. And may I be willing to do good, even to the unthankful and evil.

O blessed Jesus! how much didst thou contemn the glory and pageantry of this world, when thou professedly avowedst *thy kingdam is not of the same!* And tho' thou wast rich, being the heir of all things, yet for our sake thou becamest poor. May I, through thy grace, and in conformity to thy example, be enabled to mortify all covetous and carnal desires, and renounce all excessive care about the things of this life. May my heart be above, seeking the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness in the first place. And may I be ready to suffer all the necessities, losses and miseries of this life, with a contented and pleased mind.

So well instructed was the Son of God in obedience, as that he *counted it his meat and drink to do the will of his heavenly Father.* May I likewise serve the Lord, and do his work, not negligently, but with strength, vigour, and firmness of spirit.

O let the same mind be in me, which was in Jesus Christ! may I follow him every day, in every turn of life, as my great pattern and example! Lord Jesus, draw thy likeness and lineaments on my soul, that in end I may be perfectly like unto God; and this as the final issue of thy redeeming love.

MEDITATION III.

In Heaven there is no need of the Sun, or of the Moon, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof. *

THERE can be no darkness at all in that land, where the Sun of glory shines in its full strength. A sun that never goes down upon them: for the Lord being unto them an everlasting light, the days of their darkness and mourning are ended.

O the surrounding sensible glory of God! where, by light is as it were his cloathing, and he is covered with it as a garment! a light seven times greater than that of the sun, moon and stars, and which diffuseth itself through all the nooks of heaven, and makes all of it lightsome and transparent! and how great is the change, when a saint departeth from the foggy regions here, to the pure and serene air of celestial light and glory!

It was not the glory of God, which *Ezekiel* saw, but the likeness of it; nay it was not the likeness, but the appearance of the likeness of the glory of God, which he saw by the river of *Chebar*. Nor is it any proper adequate conception that we can have, while here, of heaven and its glory, and enjoyments. They are only but low and childish notions, which we attain, arising from a multitude of borrowed ideas, and at best are but inadequate views: only we are sure that all beauties and glories, material and immaterial, are there in an eminent and infinite manner; in comparison of which all the splendor and brightness of this world are but as dusky shadows, pictures on ice, or fair-faced nothings.

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If light is sweet, and if it is a pleasant thing to behold the sun; what will it be to contemplate the light of God's countenance! to see that fair one, whose face is like the Son of God, and whose visage is altogether divine! what will it be to behold the sun of righteousness darting upon them his vital refreshing beams of light for ever and ever!

Suppose a believer should, like *Peter* and *John*, be for a time with *Moses* and *Elias* on the mount of transfiguration, yet he must come down again, or be covered with a cloud. But O! how lightsome are *Immanuel's* lands! and how bright and ravishing are the manifestations of the divine glory in it! where there is no hiding of God's face, nor eclipsing of his glorious countenance, and where there is no more any darkness nor shadows of death, nor any interposing vail to hinder their full sight of the glory of God, and of the Lamb!

Death, I see, though 'tis a common door, at which both good and bad do enter, yet having entered it, they pass very different ways to different places. For, as in a great man's house, there may be a common gate, at which malefactors enter into a dark dungeon, and at which the children may go up stairs to the rooms above full of light: so death is common to the wicked and godly. But to the one, 'tis an entrance into the dark pit of hell; whereas, to the other, 'tis a passage into the lightsome mansions of glory; where the glory of God is visibly to be seen; where Christ is beheld as the brightness of his Father's glory; and where the angels shine in splendor and glory; and where the inheritance, the crown, the enjoyments and the inhabitants are all glorious.

If *Peter* was so affected with a sight of that glory he saw on mount *Tabor*, that forgetting all his former enjoyments below the mount, he says, 'Tis good

to be here, let us set up tabernacles here: how much more will the saints in heaven be ravished with the full outlettings of the glory of God, as it is exhibited in heaven! and with the sight of Jesus Christ, the Sun of righteousness, in his glorified human nature!

And, I think, I hear some one or other heaven-born soul breathing and crying, O for the full view of the glory of God and the Lamb! whether it be in the body or without it, whether among angels or men, whether in known or unknown regions, I would fain be where God shews himself in all his magnificency and glory; and where Christ is to be seen in all his orieny, brightness and splendor, without any shadows, and without any veil, and without the necessity of looking, as here, like prisoners in a dungeon, through only some small crevices and inlets of light. And since there is not any hope of reaching this till death loose my soul from its body; whatever aversion there is in nature to dissolution; yet since I cannot see the face of God, nor the glory of his throne without dying, let me rather die than come short of this.

I have now and then, as I thought, had some rays of the divine light shining upon my tabernacle; but alas! what sad interpositions have there been, from sense, and from the world, and from the flesh, even such as have caused dark eclipses, yea nights, even long winter-nights, in my soul. What above all things I wish for, is to see the King in his beauty. I would have a full sight of him with a full eye. He turneth back the face of his throne, and spreads his cloud before it. I would fain see the face of his throne, and the unvailed face of him that sits upon it. And since this cannot be reached till on the yonder side of death, let me die rather than not attain it.

MEDITATION IV.

*In Heaven they are entered into that Rest that remains for the People of God. **

HERE there are many things that disturb the rest of the soul, and interrupt its tranquillity: without are fightings, within are fears. But when one is got above the visible heavens, he is in that happy land, which infinite wisdom and goodness have contrived and designed to be the sweet rest and refreshment of the weary soul.

How often doth the pollution of sin estrange the soul from God, and turn it off from its center of rest! how often doth the guilt of sin pain the soul with grief, and vex it with fear! but there is nothing of this in heaven. Get once there, and there is no more any sin to give the least check to perfect serenity and contentment of spirit.

The believer, while here, finds himself much molested with the stirrings of inordinate concupiscence dwelling in the body; and hence he groans and cries, O to be perfectly freed from indwelling corruption, root and branch! O for a perfect calmness in my affections, without the least unruly motion! and 'tis in heaven he gets his wish, where there is no more any sin; the guilt, the dominion, the filth, and the very existence and inbeing of sin, being there fully and finally abolished.

And as there is no sin, so as little is there any wearisome service, or any burthensome work in heaven. How hard do we find it, while here, to keep our hearts from flying off every now and then from the original of our blessedness! what labour are we at before we can get our low, carnal, creeping hearts wrought

* Heb. iv. 9,

wrought up to any thing of a heavenly, divine disposition ! how difficult is it to get the cold heart to thaw and flame with love, or the hard and dead heart made tender and lively ! but there is nothing of such a laborious contention, or of such hard work in heaven : where there is no rebellious principle in the soul to conflict with it, and no heavy flesh to drag after it, and where its temper is altogether divine, and love and holiness its very element.

As little are there in heaven any of these deep distresses of spirit, wherewith even believers have been often mournfully exercised in this state of trial. How sadly have some of the most eminent saints been sometimes put to it, with not only a sense of an absent God, and the concealing of his love ; but also with some immediate impressions of his wrath, which have lighted like sparks of hell upon their conscience, making them say, *The arrows of the Almighty are in me, and the terrors of God are set in array against me, his fierce wrath hath gone over my head, and while I suffer his terrors I am distracted.* But there is nothing like this above. There is no complaint there of an absent God, no hiding of his face, no interruption of communion with him in those regions, where his serene countenance is lifted up on them for ever ; where his anger is turned away from them, and where they are saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation, and shall never be confounded or ashamed, their walls being salvation, and their gates praise.

Yea, there is not the least fear or disappointment, nor any thing at all to cause disturbance and uneasiness in the calm and placid regions of glory.

Here *man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward* ; and who knows what may be between him and a dying hour ? who knows what trouble he may meet with in his office, or in his relations, or in his name, or in his family, or in his worldly circum-

circumstances? It may be, he will find providence blasting his temporal comforts, and cutting him short in his worldly expectations, or frowning on him in many particulars which nearly concern him. It may be he will see times of sad defection; or he may see times of distraction and heart-breaking division; or he may see Zion in great distress, and sufferings for religion, growing hot, and coming to a great height.

But if death once close a believer's eyes, then *the wicked cease from troubling him, and then the weary are at rest*: then he is safely got above all the tempests and troubles of this life, and beyond all the snares, temptations and conflicts of his pilgrimage and warfare. He is now in that land of peace, love and joy for ever, where there is no malicious enemy, no deceitful friend, and no injurious neighbour; and where there is no empty hope to delude him, nor vain expectation to disappoint him, nor any fear to stifle his spirit, nor grief to sob his heart, nor any sickness to waste a mouldring tabernacle, nor any death to stare upon him with its pale and grim visage, or to check and confound his enjoyments.

O my soul, art thou not mightily pleased with this *rest that remains for the people of God*? Is not this a rest according to thy mind, and according to the intimate desires of thy heart? 'Tis a God in Christ that above all things thou needs; and is it not thy most ardent desire to be near him, even at his seat? Didst not thou say; *This is the one thing I have enquired of the Lord, and this will I seek after, even to behold the beauty of the Lord, and dwell in his upper temple*? And having attained it, wilt thou not say, *This is my rest, and here I will dwell for ever*? And what can thou desire more, O my soul, than a perfect immunity from all evil, and a perfect possession of all that is good, a joyful period of wants, pains, fears and sorrows;
and

and a full fruition of every thing that is good and pleasant? Is not this to be as happy as thou can wish, yea as happy as thou possibly canst conceive?

In the mean time, O blessed Redeemer, thou invites and encourages *the weary and heavy-laden sinner to come to thee, and he shall find rest in his soul.* And blessings be to thee, O compassionate lover of souls, for the sweet refreshments thou affords the weary pilgrim, even in this valley of tears. *We that believe may enter into rest,* while even here away. For great is the peace and joy there is in believing.

Truly rest is good, and soul rest is of all most desirable. And how satisfying is that rest the soul finds in the full and free pardon of all iniquity, transgression and sin? By this the soul is delivered from all the anxieties of guilt and the fears of future vengeance. And by this a soul with confidence may say, *The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear, the Lord is the strength of my heart, of whom shall I be afraid?* How pleasant also is that rest the soul attains in a thorough sanctification? whereby there is a heart-aversation and separation from all that's evil, and a free unconstrained bent unto all that is good. 'Tis rest to the affections, when they settle in love to God. 'Tis rest to the mind when it finds the pleasing of God to be its element. And O how sweet and refreshing is that rest the well-affected soul finds in conformity to God and communion with him! 'tis just now where it should be, and where it would be. 'Tis fix'd on its center, and where alone it can find rest. And no less inexpressible is the peaceful contentment and joy of the soul, when it hath some sense and experience of the love of God manifested and shed abroad in his heart. Hath he loved me, and given himself for me! have I the love of a God! O the grateful perception and comfortable

forable rest is to be returned unto thy rest, O my soul; the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. And all this rest is attained by faith. It is by faith we are justified: It is by faith the heart is purified and the conscience purged: It is by faith in Christ we draw near to God and taste that the Lord is glorious. And hence, 'tis by faith we come to a rest from the terror of sin in a well grounded peace of conscience; a rest from the power of sin in a regular order and government of soul; a rest in God and a sweet complacency of soul in his love: Also that the rest that remains for the people of God is begun in grace and perfected in glory, and we enter into it by faith.

I say to believe, Lord, help my unbelief: I can find no rest from the terrors and disturbance with darkness, sighs and rebellion hath brought on the soul, but by thy blessing: It is only thy giving up thy understanding to his conduct, who is the wisdom of God, and giving up my will to his command, who is my only rightful Lord, and by saying my soul on him for remission of sin and a right to eternal life, that I can find ease and rest to my soul, so far as I attain the same. And where I have not attained, I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Jesus Christ: I say to myself, I will give up my soul to thee, O Lord, my God.

Man's Duty to God in the Fifth Part.
In Heaven his Servants serve Him.

Heaven is a state of rest. But what rest is it? Not the rest of a stone, or of tired powers, but the rest of an active spirit, which can only be easy and at rest when it is freed from the clogs that impair its vigour and restrain its activity. It is a freedom indeed from weariness and an ease from all

toil, but not a cessation from action: for there his servants serve him; not with dull and listless affections, as ours are many a time, but with life and vigour, joy and transport for ever.

Perfect faculties will then incessantly act on the most perfect object, even the blessed God, and all that pertains to his honour and glory. 'Tis a great service they do unto their eternal king, and they are employed in it for ever. There is no unbelief there nor any corrupt affections, nor evil passions to turn away their minds from God, or to hinder the free and spontaneous motion of all the powers of their souls in the active and passive fruition of him.

O the strength of immortality and eternal life! O the eternal vigour of those happy spirits above! 'tis there they serve the Lord day and night in his temple. 'Tis a temple service they are employed in above. There they humbly adore the majesty of God, as being great and greatly to be feared in that great assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all the fair and glorious company that are about him. 'Tis in that upper house they dwell for ever, and behold with admiration the beauty of the Lord. In that temple they breathe out also their earnest requests, for the full completion of Christ's mystical body, for the full display of the glory of his kingdom, and the full and universal acknowledgment of the divine perfections and government; and joyful they are made in that house of prayer. 'Tis there, in the higher temple, that every one doth speak of his glory, of the glory of God and of the Lamb. *And blessed are they, O Lord, that dwell with thee there in thy house, for they shall ever praise thee.*

There are three principles particularly that will keep up all in heaven in a lively service, without either fainting or wearying.

First, There perfect love will keep all the glorified

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from wearying of service. This makes it that they are just where they should be, and where they would be, when they are loving their God and Redeemer, and when they are shewing and expressing their love, and when the days of eternity cannot put an end to their labour and service of love.

Again, there is there perfect conformity to God and the image of his Son. Perfect love makes perfect likeness to God: hence being fully transformed into every part of his glorious image, they are now in their element when doing the will of their heavenly Father.

Next, There is there full and perfect joy in the Lord. They find him such an object of superlative excellencies, that nothing can cool their affection to him, hence they find such strong and deep joy, as dilates, enlarges, and invigorates their spirits in his service for ever.

There the Lamb's wife is made ready, and appears in the perfect beauty of holiness, from the very womb and first opening of that morning, when the marriage will be consummate, the marriage-supper continued, and the table never dawn: where his servants serve him indeed, and to purpose: where their musick is the song of *Moses* and the Lamb, and their feast eating bread and drinking wine in the kingdom of God: where their apparel is the clean linnen of the saints: where they shall have palms in their hands and the crown of glory on their heads: where the fruit of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of it joy and assurance for ever.

How humbling is it to think that I do so little for God! *O holy one of Israel*, what I do is neither enough nor good enough for thee! O for thy grace enabling me to love thee more, and serve thee better! how humbling to think how imperfect my duties and services are! alas, what darkness, deadness, and un-

unsavouriness of spirit is there many a time as to the things of God ! what trifling unstayedness of mind ! what unwatchfulness after a good frame ! and what little care to keep what I have received ! Lord help me ; help mine infirmities, and work in me both to will and to do according to thy good pleasure.

When I attempt to raise up my soul to a life of faith, how strangely do I find myself attached to the objects of sense ! when I think to inflame my heart with love to God, and the blessed Jesus, by a frequent meditation of his goodness and grace, and to keep myself in his love ; what counter-allurements from the world and its lusts do soon cool and estrange my affections to him ! when I imagined my soul was got up to heaven, by love, by faith, by prayer ; how soon is it down again ! when I thought I would now serve the Lord with a steady vigour of spirit, and run in his ways with an enlarged heart ; how soon doth my spirit languish and my heart faint again ! Lord strengthen me with strength in my soul. Give power to him that fainteth, and him that hath no might increase in strength ; that I may run and not be weary, and walk and not be faint, but may go on in thy ways, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.

But O how pleasant is this view of heaven, that there thy servants serve thee, in the manner they would ; without any body of sin, without any clog of earth, and without any lumber of flesh, to give any check to their sprightliness in divine work and service for ever.

MEDITATION. VI.

In Heaven they are ever with the Lord.*

THERE cannot be a more sweet and satisfying prospect of heaven than this, that there we shall be for ever with our Lord; with him that hath loved us, him that hath bought us, him whose light, grace, love, countenance and glory is the very joy and happiness of heaven.

Whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord, and whilst we are absent from the body we are present with the Lord. It proves oftentimes indeed a strait to the soul to depart from its body. 'Tis a strait to part with so many organs of pleasant sensations. 'Tis a strait to be spoiled of all the grateful and entertaining objects about us, and to be removed from so many near and dear earthly relations. But yet when a gracious soul recollects himself, that to depart is to be with Christ, he'll say, this is far better than to dwell in the body; yea let me rather venture on a thousand deaths than be ever held from the presence of my Lord: for to whom can I be more related than to him that hath ransomed me for himself; and where can I find happiness but in his presence, where there is fulness of joy, and at his right-hand where there are pleasures for evermore? 'Tis certain to be near him and dwell with him, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, the beauty of heaven and the admiration of all in it, and who hath all fulness dwelling in him, is the very perfection of a believer's wishes, and the satisfying all his desires. And 'tis in heaven he attains this, being brought into the presence of the great king, to that very place where his honour and holiness dwells.

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Here believers enjoy the presence of their Lord, through the intervention of means, word, sacrament and prayer. In the various methods of his providence, and the different dispensations of his Spirit, the people of God have nearness to him and communion with him. But 'tis his immediate celestial presence above that's only satisfying: when he that sits on the throne shall dwell among them, and they shall correspond with their Lord and their love, even as nearly and familiarly as they do with one another who live together in one house, and under the same roof.

'Tis true that gracious souls, even in their militant state, have sometimes such sights of Christ, and such sensible communion with him, as have looked rather like these of overcomers than that of fighters: but how soon is their glory overshadowed again! *Jonah* complains he was cast out of God's presence. *David* mourns that the Lord hideth his face and he is troubled. The spouse bewails that her beloved had withdrawn himself. The church laments that the comforter which should relieve, is far from her. But there are no such complaints in heaven: where the face of God is never veiled from them; where there is no withdrawing of his lifted-up countenance; where there are no ups and downs in communion with him; where there is no love-sickness for want of full possession; where they are as pillars in the temple of God, and shall go no more out.

As these who tasted of the grapes of *Canaan* longed for more, so a soul that hath found how good it is to draw near unto God, cannot but stretch out it self in ardent desire for more and more of his presence, till it come to that happy place, where there is no enticing lust, nor tempting devil, nor ensnaring world, nor weakness of grace, to interrupt a most full and perfect communion with him.

Blessed Lord, I cannot by searching find thee out

unto perfection. Thou knowest the way that I take, but thou hast a path thyself that no vulture's eye hath seen. Thou comes skipping over the mountains and leaping over the hills: thou ridest on the clouds, as in chariots, by thy name J A H, and thy way is in the sea, that thy footsteps cannot be known. Hence tho' I go backwards and forwards I cannot perceive thee, or to the right or left-hand where thou works, yet I cannot see thee. O that I knew where I might find thee, that I might come even unto thy seat!

I know indeed for certainty that thou frequents where there is much fervent prayer, and that the most praying Christians have most of thy presence. I know also thou uses to be present where thy word is lively preached; for wherever thou causest thy name to be recorded, there thou wilt come and dwell. But especially at the sacrament of thy supper, the king sits at his own table, and his spikenard sendeth forth the pleasant smell thereof. And hence it shall be my daily care and study to use all ordinances and duties as means of intercourse with thee. Prayer shall be pleasant, because 'tis a private conference with Christ. The word shall be precious, because 'tis the voice of my beloved. And the Lord's supper sweet and savoury, because 'tis the body and blood of my Lord, the bread that came down from heaven.

But all this doth not satisfy me, saith the gracious soul. I would see the king in his beauty. I would fain come even unto his seat, and dwell in his immediate presence, without ever losing the sight of his face again. Lord, I would be continually with thee, and dwell for ever under the vital, transforming and refreshing beams of thy glory. And never did a prentice more desire his freedom, nor a captive his ransom, than I long for this. 'Tis the one thing I desire of the Lord: and I will seek after it all the days of my life.

MEDITATION VII.

In Heaven they enter into the Joy of our Lord.†

HEAVEN is the proper seat and place of joy, for there is God in all his consolations. Joy springs from the excellency and delectableness of the object enjoyed; and is not God infinitely excellent and delectable? And are not infinite excellencies sufficient to allure and transfuse with infinite delights? joy arises from a suitableness between the object and the faculties that are conversant about the same. For the divine beauties and sweetnesses themselves would signify but little to a vitiated taste: but if faculties perfectly refined and sublimated shall act incessantly and to their utmost, in the fruition of an infinite and eternal good, what can be wanting to make that joy full?

They build but castles in the air, who would expect any such joy while here-away. Where either the motions of sin, or the temptations of Satan, or worldly disappointments, or divine desertions, or some trouble of one kind or other in our bodies or in our minds, real or imaginary, doth every now and then break in upon our contentment, and check our peace and joy. 'Tis only in heaven that such a joy as this can be attained. Where there is pure light without any darkness, pure waters of life without any mud, and pure rivers of pleasure without any mixture; and where the utmost capacity of the soul is filled, and its desires satisfied without any alloy.

But what is more than all this, if more could be thought of, they enter into the very *joy of our Lord*. They are possessed of a joy that is of the same kind with Christ's joy. The glory of Christ is not only

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reflected on them, but impress'd on them. O wonderful how they are made partakers of the divine nature, so also of the divine joy. They have a joy in common with Christ, which they enter into in heaven; and having once entered therein, they never come out of it again. They joy with our Lord in the being and blessedness of God, and in the splendor, fullness and all-sufficiency of all his divine perfections, and in their own immediate right and free liberty to make use of them all eternally, to answer all their possible exigencies. O how high doth this carry our views of the eternal happiness of the saints! in a word, it may be said to ly, so far as their nature and capacity can admit, in the same things wherein the divine felicity consists: that is, an eternal contemplation and fruition of the infinitely satisfying perfections of the Deity, and applying them for their eternal supply, comfort and joy, makes up their heaven.

How wonderful is it, and how generous and amazing is the love of God therein, that grace and glory should be so like to other in this, as well as in every other thing: that every true believer may find that as soon as he is a partaker of grace, that he also hath entered into joy, even the joy of his Lord.

For besides the joy he has in believing, that is, the joy of receiving Christ as a priest, and the atonement in him; and of receiving him as a prophet, to dispel the clouds of darkness and horror from his mind, and the seeing the vital beams of his heavenly light; and the joy of receiving him as a king, whose very kingdom consists in *righteousness, peace, and joy in the holy Ghost*. Besides all this,

Who can express the joy of sincerity and uprightness of heart? When we are conscious to ourselves, that our hearts are single, and that we mean honesty, and need no care, toll and artifice, to colour bad de-

desires; but after a narrow and impartial inspection into our hearts and ways; then we are ashamed of our infirmities, and the imperfections that cleave to our best duties, and groan under them as a burden: that yet we are satisfied in our minds, that there is no lust but what we hate, and labour to crucify, and that there is no grace, nor any measure or degree of grace, but what we desire, covet, and endeavour to attain. It is a rejoicing indeed, when we have the testimony of a good conscience, that with godly simplicity and sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world.

And as love is the sweet satisfaction of the soul in the object beloved, so love to God is so sweet an exercise, that if the mind is employed in it with warmth and vigour, if we get such a clear view of God's loveliness and love manifested in Christ, as fills and ravishes us with delight; we may well spare the pleasures of the world, and pity any in it that knows nothing of the joys of divine love.

How high also is that complacency in his spirit which a man finds in an entire resignation to the will of God: how often are we at a loss, what to do with ourselves, and how to dispose of our concerns; besides the uneasiness every one must find, in being reluctant to his will, who does all things well, and prevails for ever? But when we yield to him, that as the whole universe is at his command and dispose; so also shall we; and as all from the highest angels to the meanest insect, from sun, moon and stars, to the smallest atom, are labouring on in fulfilling the laws of their Creator; so also we, in our capacity, shall join them in fulfilling the will of our great Lord: there is such a serene temper, and steady composure of mind in all this, as is the sweet repose of a contented mind, a very heaven upon earth.

Yea humility and self-denial, tho' reckoned among the

the most burdensome parts of religion, contribute greatly to the Christian's peace and joy. O the sweet satisfaction of the soul in going out of itself to live immediately on God, and the fulness of the Mediator! this brings the mind into a pleasant indolence; for come what will, he is *careful about nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, he makes his request unto God.* Can any thing give greater security and ease than the putting all our stock into God's hands, and venturing it all in his service in confidence of his promise.

The cross itself wants not its comfort, when taken up for Christ. For whatever a man may lose for Christ, he can never lose by him. And suffer and lose what he will, he may still possess his God, and possess his soul in patience. Who hath greatest peace in his soul, the man whose heart swells and riseth against providence, or he that meekly acquiesceth? The soul that is vexed with repining discontent and despair, or he that bears all with quiet composure? The man that faints in adversity, or he that goes on still in duty with alacrity? And who hath more sweet experience of God's care than those, who in all cases whether of want or opposition, or sickness, or strange accidents, or desertion and damps of spirit, patiently wait on God?

To receive grace then is to receive joy. And to enter into a state of grace is to enter into a state of joy, even upon earth. There cannot be a spark of grace in a soul, without a proportional degree of the joy of our Lord. The very first principles of the divine life infused into the soul, diffuseth it with joy. There can be no self-motion, or free spontaneous action of the soul in spiritual things, which is a thing essential to the spiritual life, without pleasure in these motions; since, if pleasure ceased, the spring of spiritual motion would cease also. Yea re-
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penitance itself could never take place without pleasure and joy. For were there nothing but grim fear, or gloomy sadness in the soul, without any thing to revive and gladden the heart, this would contract an aversion to God, and utterly alienate the heart from him. The seeds of penitent tears could never ripen into a harvest of joy, unless there was joy in the seed. For true it is, that *what a man soweth, that shall he reap*. O blessed be the Lord, for making his people so sure of their promised joy, as even to begin a part of it in this valley of tears!

MEDITATION VIII.

*In Heaven they are in the City of the living God, among an innumerable Company of Angels, and the General Assembly and Church of the First-born. **

HHeaven, as 'tis the palace of the great king, so 'tis the seat of the blessed: the glorious dwelling of angels and saints, where they are enlightened and transfused with the glory of Jehovah and the Lamb, a glory as much surpassing all worldly show, as eternity surpasses time, or, as the light of God's countenance exceeds the brightness of the sun.

They are there in the spiritual and intellectual world, where they have no need of borrowed images, because they see all things as they are in their true and naked beings.

Man through his revolt from God was banished, and confined from having any commerce with the invisible world, and all the glorious and blessed beings that replenish the same. And having thus lost all intercourse with happy spirits, and all the superior rank of beings, he turns himself to the inferior, to herd with the beasts of the field; no more mind-
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* Heb. xii. 22, 23.

ing his spirit, than if he had none; looking wholely downwards as the soul of a beast doth, and having as little power over his sensual appetites as they have over theirs.

But the whole work and design of grace being to restore lapsed man to commerce with the intellectual and invisible world, by induing him with such principles as makes him fit for the heavenly community and for associating with them in the same blessed and glorious kingdom; all this is fully attained, when the soul is got into heaven.

Departed saints are possessed of the same rights, privileges and dignities with the angels in heaven, and the general assembly of the first-born. But who can tell what these are in particular, and how many and how great? Who can express or conceive what it is to be kings and priests unto God! what to be heirs of light! heirs of all things! heirs of God himself! what to have crowns on their heads, even the crown of glory that fadeth not away! and to sit with Christ on his throne! What it is to have authority over many cities, yea power over the nations! what to have the name of God, the name of the city of God, and Christ's new name written on them! how glorious is that city, whose light is the glory of God! whose walls are high, and beautified with twelve gates; and at the gates twelve angels; and whose foundations are pearl and streets of pure gold; and what must the deckings and furniture of the houses be! but the all of this is veiled from our sight; and were every star a sun, they could not shadow forth the celestial glory and dignity of saints.

And as all the heavenly inhabitants are possessed of the same privileges, at least in kind, and in the main, so also they are all conducted by the same laws. There are those three or four laws in particular that rule all in heaven.

One general law is their heavenly nature, where they are for ever under the sweet necessity of being holy; holiness to the Lord being engraven on their spirits, and the image of God perfected in them. And nothing is left in all their frame, that's contrary to the divine nature. And this is a law more strong, and sweetly necessitating, than any written word.

The law of love in particular binds all in heaven to the nearest union with God, and with one another; for as they see God face to face, so they love with such affection as unites heart to heart: and hence they cannot but love his image, and love what he loves. This is a law so efficacious, that they never weary of serving God day and night in his temple, because their labour is the labour of love.

And sure none of the heavenly inhabitants will forget their essential dependence on their Maker; and that 'tis only the vital breath of the father of spirits that enlivens and refreshes their spirits, which otherwise would pant, gasp and die for want of the air of glory.

And as little will they forget their eternal obligation and subjection to Christ, the great *Immanuel*. They will own they hold their all of him, and under him; and hence they sing, *Worthy is the Lamb to receive honour and glory, and power, and dominion, for ever.*

Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of the living God! beautiful for situation, and the joy of the whole earth, is heaven, the mountain of God's holiness. God is known in her palaces for a refuge, and for her eternal joy and glory: and about his throne are a splendid and innumerable numerous retinue of angels and glorified saints, attending his majesty, and beholding the brightness of his face, one glance of which is enough to look all created light into darkness. O happy, happy ones, that shine like the sons of

of the morning, by the brightness and glory of his unvailed countenance !

But, alas, the many things that overshadow the glory of the intellectual world from us, and intercept our view of what will then be revealed !

This earthly tabernacle, my soul carries about with it, draws a veil over the inclosed spirit, and intercepts its sight of the glories of the spiritual world. O that I were once disincumber'd from this lumber ! happy day, when the soul shall be no more imprisoned in such a dark cell, but shall walk at liberty in these regions, where there is no darkness, no shadow of death !

This material visible world draws a curtain over the glory of heaven, and parts us from the world of spirits, which thereby lies out of sight. The cloud, this is, that the Lord hath spread before the face of his throne. O happy soul, which having safely passed through the doors of death, comes where the face of God's throne is turned upon them !

The strong attachment we feel to the animal, sensitive nature, greatly bemists us with respect to the heavenly glory : this benights the soul in sense, and confounds it with many irregular passions, and makes it, that at best it can only peep through narrow avenues. O happy spirit ! that's above the dominion of the bodily senses, and needs not their ministry, but can see without any borrowed similes every thing as it is, and God as he is, and so perceive what *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined* !

Unbelief also is such a dark cloud upon the mind, as that all the glories of the other world appear as notions or nothings : or, all the lightsome regions above are look'd upon as but dark and dismal territories. O to be altogether freed from the remains of

of unbelief, and that faith itself were turned into vision!

While the soul dwells still in the body, corruption dwells still in the soul, and this darkens our sight of the divine glory. Sin is that hemisphere of darkness that's opposite to the light of glory. The more sin is subdued, the clearer glimpse will one have of the glory of heaven; and a full view of the same cannot be attained, without a full freedom from sin. O to be altogether and for ever freed from sin!

The very natural infirmity there is in the most eminent of God's saints, while lodged in these clay-tabernacles, hinders them to have a full sight and sense of the glory and happiness of heaven, and its enjoyments. The soul, while in the body, hath such weak eyes, and weak powers, that the brightness of heaven's glory, let out in its full strength, would strike it blind. We could not see by reason of so great a light. *Lord, grant, according to the riches of thy glory, to strengthen me with might by thy Spirit in the inner man, that I may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and may be filled with the fulness of God!*

MEDITATION IX.

*In Heaven there shall be no more Death.**

AS no sin can enter into the gates of the *New Jerusalem*, so neither can any death. Here the corrupt soul communicates its passions to the body, and the vitiated body by its distempers infects and pains the soul. Hence comes at last a dissolution of the vital union betwixt them. But then the corrupt soul will

* Rev. xxi. 4.

will be made perfectly pure, through the transforming image of Christ; and the vile body made conform to his glorious body; so that the shadows of death can no more hover over their heads.

There is not any seed or principle of death to be found in the regions of a blessed immortality and eternal life: no inordinate affection, no vexing care, no consuming fear, no pining discontent, no irksome despair, nor any other inlet to death, is there to be found for ever.

Yea, there is not any inactivity that looks like the image of death. No drowly body is there, nor torpid soul, nor sluggish powers: but all are awake and lively, and made eternally vigorous and sprightly, in an incessant active fruition of God, and in doing him all the service they can.

And hence there is no fear of dying any more. No dismal apprehension of entering into the dark and gloomy shadows of death; but they live an eternal life, without any fear that any thing can interrupt their happiness and glory for ever.

What a dying life do I live, while here in the flesh! I am plunged in a flood of discordant humors; my soul is pent up in a body, no part whereof is not liable to some distemper or other, and every part with diseases of several kinds.

How is the true enjoyment of life interrupted by a dull and tardy body! either vapid fumes have beclouded my mind, or the languishing dulness of my natural spirits have sat so heavy on my soul, as that life in these hours has been rather a wearing out of time, than a living in it. And how often doth some care, some fear, some disappointment, or some uneasiness or other, break in upon the circle of life, and disturb my possession thereof!

Besides, I have been in deaths often: being chastened with sore pain and sickness on my bed, and of long

long continuance, such as has made me in the night to be counting the hours, and to wish for the flow returns of the morning; and in the day to wish again for the silent hours of the night; and all this with a near view of the last convulsion of nature, that shall part soul and body asunder, which cannot be far off.

O blessed God! let it be far from me to complain of thy providence in this. I do not grudge at the fragility of my body. I have reason to give thee thanks for the same. I remember the times, as I think, when being smitten with thy good chastening hand, I have lien down in the bed as willingly and contentedly, as I was pleased to be raised up again, when thou thought it fit.

But O how reviving is it to think, that there is nothing like dying in heaven! where they live in eternal vigour and activity; where there is no sin to let in sickness, or death, nor any distance from God, the life and happiness of spirits; and where there is no languor of body, nor weariness of soul, nor dullness of organs, nor numbness of spirit, nor dolorous hours, nor restless days, nor wearisome nights, nor any thing but pure life, peace and joy for ever.

MEDITATION X.

In Heaven they live on the tree of life.

THERE they are come to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and are in him in a most perfect and ineffable manner. He is that tree of life that is ever green, verdant and fruitful, and whose leaves and fruits are medicines for mortality.

Jesus Christ, that great IMMANUEL, remaining for ever the glorious, quickening head of all in heaven;

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not only a head of dominion, but also a head of vital refreshing influences. Why is the Lamb's throne eternal in heaven? Why is he said to be their temple? Why is he represented as standing in the midst of all that fair and glorious company, and they said to be his servants for ever? Or why doth he for ever subsist in our nature, and never put it off? Why, but to shew that he is to remain our eternal prophet, priest and king, and our eternal quickening head.

In heaven they are light, but 'tis in the Lord; *who is the brightness of his Father's glory*, and as immediately from him as beams from the sun. In heaven they have the strength of immortality, but 'tis through the working of Christ's glorious power, without which they would be as weak, as our bodies, when deserted by their souls. In heaven they have a pure and interminable possession of a most happy life; but 'tis through a vital implantation in Christ, and vital influences from him, without whom they could neither live nor breathe, nor act eternally. So that all the saints, yea all the angels in heaven, are so many branches ingrafted in this tree of life, without which they could neither live nor *bring forth fruit, more than a branch can bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine.*

As no created thing can act independently, so no created life can maintain itself, without renewed influences from the fountain of life: not that of *Adam* in his innocency; not that of the angels in heaven; yea, not that of the human nature of Christ could subsist without a constant divine influence: and 'tis Christ as Mediator, Christ as a God incarnate, that is entrusted with the whole power of vital communications. For this end he hath power of all flesh, that he might give, and might ever be giving *eternal life to all that believe.* Yea, all the numerous and august assembly of heaven, a company so great, that no man, yea no one can number, be he man or
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angel, are said to stand about the Lamb; and why, but to receive refreshing influences of light, life, joy and glory from him eternally.

'Tis he that fills all in heaven with an immortal vivacity: he is the light and life of that higher house; and his sweet and lively influences, which are there perfect and uninterrupted, raise all the heavenly inhabitants to the full power and strength of immortality and eternal life.

'Tis comforting to think, we have a God over our heads, to look after us, and rule us. Alas, what could we make of ourselves, if left to our own shift! 'Tis more comforting that we can call this God our own God, and call him more our own than we can call houses or lands, or ought that we have, our own. The fulness of the Deity, and a property in the same, is very satisfying; and the more so, that *no man can take this joy from us*. But that this fulness of the Deity, for our more easy and familiar participation of the same, should dwell bodily in a created nature, and particularly in ours, this gives all satisfaction possible, that poor necessitous creatures can want or desire. An absolute God could not answer our exigencies: his majesty would astonish, and his justice terrify our guilty and misgiving minds. But a God dwelling in the human nature, and there exhibiting all the divine glory for our contemplation, and all the fulness of the Spirit for our vivification and consolation; this raises the soul to the highest pitch of humble confidence, admiration and joy.

The believer's life then being *hid with Christ in God*, tho' the outgoings of this life should be weak in us, yet, being secured in the head, we may trust that, *because he lives we shall live also*; and that our spiritual live is more safe in his holding us by his power, than in our holding of him by faith.

My Lord, and my God, *to whom can I go, but un-*

to thee, who hast the words of eternal life? Thou camest into the world, that thou might give life, and give it more abundantly. I'll seek then to thee for the preserving of habitual grace, when it is weakened with ill usage: I'll trust in thee for thy quickening spirit, when mine hath contracted a numbness and deadness: and I'll look to thee for further degrees of grace, that it may grow in quantity and quality, and bring forth more, and better, and sweeter fruit.

MEDITATION XI.

*In Heaven Christ will be for ever glorified among his Saints.**

TIS fully seen there that justice and judgment are the habitation, even of the Mediator's throne; when through the substitution of Christ's righteousness, and the vouchsafements of his sanctifying Spirit, souls that were vilely debased by sin shall be made so holy and beautiful through the comeliness of Christ, as that justice and holiness shall declare for their admission to heaven; where they may lift up their faces before the throne of God's holiness, without spot and without fear. *O! rejoice in the Lord ye righteous, sing unto him, ye saints of his, and give him thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.*

There it appears that Christ is the wisdom, the manifold wisdom of God: a wisdom making it manifest what great things infinite power can work, how low infinite love can stoop, and how high infinite grace can exalt. A wisdom exhibiting a glorious constellation of dazzling holiness and amiable goodness, of majestic power and charming love, of venerable justice and smiling grace, all brightening and casting a ravishing light upon one another. O! when the hid treasures of Christ's wisdom and knowledge are there opened up, and they come to the full acknowledge-

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* 2 Thess. i. 10.

ment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ: when to the principalities and powers in heavenly places is made known the manifold wisdom of God; with what profound adoration will they cry, *O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!* etc.

And what mighty things will they have to say and sing of the power of our *Immanuel!* Of his power, who by a touch of his Spirit hath melted the heart that was harder than rocks before; of his power, who by breathing upon the soul, hath raised it to life, that was as dry bones before: of his power, who hath preserved this spark of life in the midst of a thousand quench coals: and of his power, who by a pull of his omnipotency hath drawn up souls to heaven, that by sin were heavy as the sand, yea heavy as hell, before. Certainly, say they, *this is the Lord's doing:* he that hath wrought such things in us is God; and *we give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned!*

And many a long and pleasant story will they have there to tell of his love: of his electing love, his reconciling love, and his redeeming love. For he it was who held a consultation from eternity with the Father and the holy Spirit about man's redemption. And he it was that revealed peace on earth, and God's good-will unto the children of men, and gathereth together in himself all things which are in heaven, and which are in earth. And he it was that ransomed us from sin and death, from hell and the grave; and *we are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with his own precious blood.* 'Tis this that makes the glorified sing a new song, saying, *Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation?*

And with no less pleasure will they remember his

converting grace, when he not only said unto them *Turn ye, turn ye, sinners, why will ye die:* but he caused the spirit to enter as into dry bones, that they might live, rise up, stand before him, and be to the praise of the glory of his grace. How thankfully will they remember and adore that rich and powerful grace of God that hath made them *meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*, by delivering them while in the body from the power of Satan, and translating them into the kingdom of his dear Son!

And with as high strains will they celebrate the glory of his pardoning love. That whereas their iniquities might have been staring them in the face eternally, and the arrows of God's wrath pierced into the midst of their souls; to find all sin forgiven and forgotten for ever, and divine justice perfectly atoned and pleased: with what joyful acclamations will they sing upon the remembrance of this, *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, transgression and sin*, and hath not any anger against us, because thou delightest in mercy?

And how can they ever forget they are in heaven, or cease to make mention of the loving-kindness of the Lord, in disarming death and vanquishing hell, and opening the gates of the celestial paradise that were shut upon apostate rebellious man! we are here in glory, will they say; we are under one roof with all the fair company above in the palace of the great king; we are where we may satiate ourselves with the communications and pleasant sensations of divine love! and what can love, what can even infinite love do more than this? What can it do more than raise us to as high a glory as we can bear? And make us as happy as happiness itself can make us? *Unto him that hath loved us, and made us kings and priests unto God and his father, unto him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.* ○

O that I could begin a song of our beloved ! O that I could give suitable thanks unto him ! to him that was one of the great council held in *Elohim* about the elect's redemption, where neither man nor angel could be admitted ! to him that redeems us to God with his own blood ! to him that hath made peace through the blood of his cross to reconcile all things to himself, whether they be things on earth, or things in heaven ! O that I could do something for the glory of him, who hath called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to a purpose of his own, which was before the world began ! of him, who pardons freely every one that wills it, and hath his grace ready for the chief of sinners, upon their acceptation of the same ! of him, who purifies a peculiar people unto himself, and purges their consciences from dead works to serve the living God ! of him, who by death hath destroyed death, and vanquished it in its own land ! of him, who having purchased a glorious inheritance for us, hath ascended unto heaven, having led captivity captive, that he may there prepare a place for us !

May I ever give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever ! May I speak to the commendation of him that alone doth great wonders of love, for his mercy endureth for ever ! but who can utter thy mighty acts, O Lord ? or show forth all thy praise ? Blessed are they that keep judgment and do righteousness at all times. Remember me, I pray thee, O Lord, with the favour thou bearest to thy people : O visit me with thy salvation, that I may see the good of thy chosen, and may rejoice with the gladness of thy nation, and may glory with thine inheritance : and at length may I join with the heavenly concert in singing, *Worthy is the Lamb, that was slain and is alive, and now liveth for evermore, to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing, for ever.*

MEDITATION XII.

In Heaven the Lord Jesus is eternally admired. *

AS then he comes to be glorified in his saints, so also to be admired of all that believe. *His name is the wonderful counsellor! the mighty God, the everlasting Father! and the prince of peace.* 'Tis the person of our *Immanuel* that is the beauty of heaven, the wonder of angels, and the admiration of saints. He is the man who is God's fellow, for he is *God-man*; and hereby all beauties, created and increated, are eminently and transcendently in him. He is *God*, and therefore an infinite ocean of perfections is in him: and he is *man* in personal conjunction with God, and hereby in his human nature he is highly exalted above all the angels; yea, let all the angels of God worship thee. He is *God*, and therefore his countenance is altogether divine; and *man*, and thereby God is visibly to be seen, and familiarly enjoyed in him. O wonderful! *will God indeed dwell with man!* who could have looked for such a thing as this? O angels, archangels and cherubims of glory, could ye have thought that the Creator and the creature would have made up one person! could ye have thought an union, so very marvellous, would have been made with such a nature as ours! not with spirits of an higher order, but with an inferior sort, so meanly lodged as to dwell in houses of clay! could ye have thought that such an union was to be made with our nature, not when it was innocent and pure, but when it was made vile with sin! and now finding that all this is done by the Lord, who is *wonderful*.

in counsel, and excellent in working: are not ye prying into this mystery with wonder and admiration, as being what you can never comprehend?

Our great Immanuel will be the eternal wonder of heaven, not only with respect to the personal union between the human and divine nature in him, but also with respect to the inherent and habitual grace of his human nature: the spirit of grace being communicate to him in his incarnation above the capacity of angels, and men! let them exhaust, or even comprehend if they can, that immeasurable fulness of the Spirit that dwells in him! there is in him such grace, such goodness, such beauty, such sweetness, such mercy, and such compassion, in such an eminent and transcendent measure, as may fill and ravish all in heaven, and transport them into eternal trances and raptures of pleasure and joy!

The low condescension of the Son of God in suffering so much for the relief of a wretched race of the creatures will also be the eternal admiration of all in heaven. The consubstantial Son of God was abased! the brightness of the Father's glory was obscured! the sun of righteousness was eclips'd! the light of the world was in an hour of darkness! the express image of the Father's person was in the form of a servant! the fair one, the chief among ten thousands, had his visage more marred than any man's! the prince of life died! the God of glory was crucified! the beauty of heaven endured the shame! the excellency of strength was nailed to the cross! O wonderful! let the angels look to these things with the most prying minds; they will find enough to dazzle their apprehension, altho' their invention, and out-reach admiration itself.

A God incarnate will also be the eternal wonder of heaven, in his great offices as our Mediator, and in the great and abiding effects of them for ever.

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As he is an eternal prophet, he is the wonderful counsellor, the light of this world and the next, the sun of righteousness that never goes down, but shines eternally on all in heaven with the rays of light, not to amuse them, but to be a lamp within them to direct their intercourse with God. O marvellous! how will it affect the saints of light, that whereas they were once all fear, confusion and horror, because of darkness and the shadows of death, now they see a great light, *even the light of the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ?*

As the Son of God is an eternal high priest over both this lower and that upper house of God, he will appear gloriously in heaven as the wonderful prince of peace, that hath brought them there into the presence of God, and keeps them in it! had not the Son of God's love, as our great and high priest, atoned the justice of God, and finished transgression, and made an end of sin, by bringing in everlasting righteousness, mankind, that were all in conspiracy against God, and doing what they could to raze the memorial of him from the earth, that he might have no more a name therein, had been banished for ever from his presence; and so a whole tribe of the creation had been utterly and finally lost. But the Lord Mediator, having laid down his life as a sacrifice for our sins, and a ransom for our souls; this, as it will be the terror, envy and torment of all in hell, so it will be the everlasting praise and admiration of all in heaven. For comprehend they cannot the depth, the height, the length and the breadth of this, since 'tis a love that passeth knowledge!

And likewise as the Son of God and Redeemer of men, is acknowledged by all in heaven, to be the crowned king of *Zion*, the king of saints, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, the prince of the kings of the earth; he appears there as the wonderful
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mighty God! and becomes the eternal admiration of all these loyal subjects above! for let them measure, if they can, the riches and efficacy of his grace, and the irresistible strength of his power, and the unmeasurable depth of his wisdom, in drawing souls to heaven, when held back, not only by all the powers of darkness, but also by a load of sin, so heavy as makes all the creation groan! O 'tis well done in thee, great lover of souls! O 'tis heroically done! gird thy sword, O hero, upon thy thigh! O most mighty captain of our salvation, ride prosperously in thy glory, majesty and state, subduing souls to thy self, and vanquishing all the enemies of our salvation! O the admirable vouchsafements of thy grace. 'Tis the Lord's doing this, and 'tis marvellous in our eyes! let the crown for ever flourish on his head! boundless eternity, be thou filled with the praises of the Lamb, and of him that sits on the throne!

How many things hath the believer also to say even while here, in admiration of the gracious conduct of our Lord and Saviour; whereby, while we are in the body, he fits and forwards the soul to glory!

When the clouds of darkness and shadows of death did sit down upon my eye-lides: when the pollution of my sin had caused many self loathings, and sickly resentments of mind: when my soul, being dead in sin, was more ghastly than an interred carcase: yet through the grace of my Redeemer, my soul is made light in the Lord, and looks now like the sons of the morning, and its powers and affections being renewed and transformed, 'tis made alive to God, and fitted up for the pure celestial delights, above. O! who can admire enough this grace; that grace which enlightens a dark mind! enlivens a dead soul! purifies a defiled conscience! melts a hard heart, and comforts a mournful spirit! *Lord, what is man*

man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou in this manner visitest him!

It will further raise the admiration of the humble soul, if he finds, that besides all this, even these things are reckoned either steps of sovereignty in the way of the Spirit, or angry like tokens; as when violent temptations, fiery trials, mournful desertion and strange damps of spirit, sadly harass the soul; even these shall be made use of to forward the believer in his way heaven ward, as many a time happens. For by such distresses of spirit, the Lord moulds the heart of a man into a more humble, resigned and submissive frame: a thing the believer values as the kernel of all blessings. And hereby he works a strong impression of the fear of God, which is a composing state of mind; and the serious soul prefers this to all the gaities of the world. And hereby the soul is brought into a more serious attention to the Lord's way and walk, and to observe in what order storms of wrath succeed clouds of sin, and how all clears up again upon the soul's kissing the rod, and its kindly deference to the Lord, and flaying itself upon him.

And yet more wonderful is it, if, when the soul is suffered to be soiled with a temptation, this very thing shall be over-ruled to the greater weakening of the body of sin; as occasioning a deeper set of humility, a stronger hatred of sin, more experience of the deceitfulness of the heart, and greater watchfulness over it, more firm resolutions against sin, and care to mortify it, more tender walking, more near dependence on God, and incessant prayers for his grace. O wonderful! who can effect the like of this! who can bring good out of evil? Who but he who at first commanded the light to shine out of darkness!

Yea, the very conduct of providence in the hand of

Christ, about a person whom he is sitting up for glory, doth in the reflection raise in the soul a pleasant admiration of the wonderful works of Christ's wisdom and love.

How ready are our hearts to break away from God, and to fly all the world over to seek rest in the creature, till divine providence gives us such a sensible experience of the nothingness, or the fickleness, or the want, or the vexation of the creature, as that the soul is satisfied, that neither, this nor that, nor any other enjoyment of worldly things, can be a rest to the soul.

When a poor soul begins to be entangled in the world, or to be enticed to some flesh-pleasing sin, or to swell big with the breath of human applause, and thereby loses its relish of things spiritual and heavenly, the Lord breaks in oftentimes upon the man's riches, or his family, or his health, or his conscience, and mortifies his inordinate affections by removing their very objects.

We are oft in hazard of sleeping out our lives in careless neglect and slumber, till the Lord send affliction to knock at the door of our hearts, and to cry as the angel to *Elijah*, *Up thou hast a great journey before thee*. The best are ready to go astray from God, being drawn away by our own lusts, or driven away by the frowns or follies of the world. We are apt to turn aside to every by-path, which carnal reason, or a crooked heart frames to itself. But by afflictions the Lord lays hand upon us, and brings us back again. And blessed Lord, 'tis kindly and mercifully done, to reduce us to thy ways again cost what it will.

To be brought into straits and necessities has been often the mournful exercise of gracious souls. Yet if the Lord by this hedge in our way with thorns; if he cut us short of the enjoyments of sense, that

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we may live more by faith; if he embitters our living in the world to wean us from it, and sets us a longing for heaven our final rest; or if by shutting up a visible relief, he makes us to seek that in God, which cannot be found in the creature: all this is marvelously well done for the help of a soul.

When the Lord breaks in upon our family, or exercises a person with the loss of husband, or wife, or children, this sits near the heart of the best; for these are next to our souls, and to rent these from us is like the renting the caul of our hearts. But if the Lord by removing of these hinders us to place our chief complacence in any thing but himself; if he make such a void in our souls as nothing can fill up but his own fulness; or if he make us hold with himself as enough, and rest on his all-sufficiency as being our all in all: this also is a part of the divine conduct about souls; which cannot be thought upon but with humble admiration, how all the ways of God are mercy and truth to them that fear him.

The Lord is oftentimes pleased to exercise his people with sickness and pain of long continuance, which hath made them mourn as a dove, and chatter as a crane. Yet if by this, he gives us a contempt of bodily pleasures; and subdues our carnality and fleshliness; if he mortify our desires to the things of this life, and give us a distaste of the ill favour of the dung hill pleasures of this world in comparison of pure and heavenly delights; if he make us live as on the borders of eternity, and create in us strong desires to be at home with the Lord in that land, where the inhabitant shall not say, he is sick; this ought to cause that soul say, *O Lord thou art my God, I will exalt thee; I will praise thy name, for thou hast done wonderful things, thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.*

The reproof or scourge of tongues hath often been,

been like to break the hearts of some of the most eminent saints. But if this shall make a man enter deeply into himself, and be profoundly humble before the Lord in the sense of his own unworthiness; if it mortify the pride and vanity of his mind, and make him more careful to be good than to be thought so: this also is a part of the conduct of that divine providence that's wonderfully gracious.

So that every believer, when he observes the conduct of Christ to him, whether in the workings and dispensations of his Spirit, or in the methods of his providence, has reason to say, *Many, O Lord my God, are the wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts to us-ward cannot be reckoned up in order before him.*

MEDITATION XIII.

*In heaven God is All in all.**

TIS the fruition of God that is the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the first and the last, and the all of heaven's happiness. Were it not for the light of God's countenance, the highest heavens would be but dark regions, yea as a dismal horrid vault, where spirits would be chained up in everlasting darkness. And were it not for the breathings of life from God, the fountain of life, all the inhabitants of heaven would starve, waste, pine and die eternally. And were it not for the fulness of God, there opened up, heaven would be a desert, a dismal solitude, not inhabited by angels of light, but by horrid devils and infernal beings. And were it not for the fulness of joy that's there in God's presence, heaven would be a valley of tears, a *Bochim* or place of weepers. There

* 1 Cor. xv. 28.

There is enough indeed in God, and the fruition of his fulness, to make the most enlarged capacities happy, eternally happy. Infinite light, infinite clearness, infinite beauty, infinite sweetness and goodness, is enough to entertain, please, delight and ravish all in the heavens. The glory and fulness of God, filling all the mansions of heaven, may well be thought sufficient to fill all its inhabitants with eternal joy and delight: for where can happiness be found, if not in God? And where is God so fully enjoyed, as on the throne of his glory?

But should one entertain a fond conceit of some pleasant regions above, without the presence of God, how vain is the dream! pleasant, without God! pleasant, with what! they are beams from the sun of righteousness, that make heaven to be a lightsome region. They are rays of the God of glory, that make all the company there to be fair, gay and majestic: 'tis the eternal issues of his increased sweetness, that makes it a pleasant and delectable land. And, without his glorious presence, the heavenly country would be dark territories, and all the spirits there would lie gasping in the throws of eternal death, for want of the reviving and refreshing air of glory.

Whatever is spoken of the dignities, the privileges and the joys of the other world, they are but the shadowed delineations of the fruition of God, which is the sum and substance, and all of heaven's glory. For if God is *all in all*, then all created delights, divided from him, or not subordinate to him, are as nothing in nothing. *Abraham, Moses, Elias*, the prophets apostles, martyrs, &c. appear as nothing there, but for that of God which is seen in them. And take away the presence of God from angels, they could no more comfort than black and horrid fiends. And were it not for the glory of God that shines in the numberless myriads of spirits above, all would be but

but ghastly, gloomy and frightful companions.

Hence all in heaven look down themselves, and all created beings, as mere issues from God and his goodness; and as being nothing, but in him, and for him.

And this kind of self-annihilation, giving room for the fulness of God to fill all things, is absolutely requisite for the perfection and happiness of the saints in heaven. For when the soul counts not upon itself, or upon its life and happiness but only in him and for him, who is originally and finally the all of our happiness, this opens it wide to be filled with God. And the capacity and circumference of the soul being stretched to its uttermost, to take in all of God it can, other objects appear but little in its sight, yea as mere nothings, but for that of God, which is to be enjoyed through them; And thus the soul sucks in eternal refreshing irradiations from the God of glory.

O blessed God, how great is our sin, folly and misery in putting any creature in thy room, or in thinking that any thing can be wanting in infinite all-sufficiency, for the completing of our happiness!

Holy one of *Israel!* no sin can take place but so far as we forget that thou art *all in all*. The lusts of the flesh are defiling, as they estrange the heart from God, and indispose the soul for delighting in him. The lusts of the eye are unlawful, because, instead of the soul's being full of God and in-wrought with his image, all the beasts of the field, and the form of every creeping thing, is portrayed upon it. And self, usurping the room of God, and claiming his prerogative of being *all in all*, hath the crown of pride on its head, debasing the soul of man.

But O how safe and satisfying is it to lay up our contents with God, and to hold with his fulness as a sufficient inheritance! have I the love of a God!

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have I an interest in God! infinite all-sufficiency communicating itself infinitely to answer all my exigencies, and to satisfy all my desires, may well be thought enough; and I'll say of this, that 'tis all my desire, and all my salvation; this is my rest, and here will I dwell. *Whom have I in the heavens but thee, O Lord, and there is none on the earth my soul desires besides thee: And because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.*

When the God of Israel vouchsafed to Moses such a glorious account of himself, by the name of I AM, what is the great meaning of this, but to shew, that he is BEING itself, and BLISS itself; that he is the ALL and the WHOLE of it? And in saying so solemnly I AM, he leaves it to all the creatures to tell what they would be, and what they would have, and assures them hereby that *that* he is; that he is that very thing they want, that he is it eminently and infinitely; that he is either *that*, or he is something infinitely better.

O every creature in heaven and in earth! hear the great fulness of being and blessedness, saying, I AM; I AM all things thou wants, or can wisely desire. For, when he says I AM we may fill up the rest of the proposition, till, from our comfortable experience, we find him saying, *I am light, I am life, I am strength, I am joy, I am happiness, and all things to souls.*

So he himself hath explained it. Dost thou complain of ignorance, and darkness of mind? He says, I AM understanding. complainest thou of the guilt of sin? He says, *I, even I, AM he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake.* Dost thou complain of weakness and infirmities? He saith, *I AM the Lord God almighty:* Or of danger? He saith,

saith, *I AM thy shield*: or of trouble and misery? He saith, *I AM thy exceeding great reward*. Or dost thou fear changes? He saith, *I AM that I AM; I am the Lord, I change not*. Or fearest thou death? He saith, *I AM he that liveth, and behold I am alive for evermore*.

And hath not the believer oftentimes a very sweet experience of this? hath he not found, that when he comes to the Lord with all his wants and troubles, and freely and humbly tells him of all things that relate to his flesh and to his spirit, in this world and in the next, and hath rested on him for all in all; that he hath found him help at hand, both by the kind influences of his Spirit, and the benign conduct of his providence? And doth not this raise his soul to such a pitch of high satisfaction, as that all the world is nothing to God, and the blessed Jesus? But in the want, or in the abundance, of worldly comforts, his earnest cry is where is my God? where is my Saviour? *Return unto thy rest, O my soul*. And having found him, he says, *The lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places, and I have a goodly heritage*.

He is no fool that can satisfy himself with God, and rest in him as enough: for promise what thou wilt from thy God, if 'tis for thy good, thou cannot be disappointed.

O blessed Lord, I desire to call thee my light, my strength, my life, my joy, my crown, my hope, my happiness, my heaven; and more than all this through thy grace, I'll say of thee, *Thou art my God, mine own God, my God, and my all, my God, and my all in all*. O may this sentence proceed from the bottom of my heart! And remember thy word unto thy servant, O Lord, on which thou causest him to hope.

MEDITATION XIV.

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath laid up in heaven for those that fear him, and trust in him †.

CAN any conceive or express an exceeding and eternal weight of glory? What heart is big enough to comprehend such a great and growing description, as a glory, a weight of glory, an eternal weight of glory, an exceeding or hyperbolical eternal weight of glory! yea further, an hyperbolical weight of glory, which is more than hyperbolical! the glory of heaven is so inexpressibly great, that tho' one hyperbole should be mounted upon another, they cannot reach, much less surmount the height of that glory. So said he, who had seen more of it than any other of *Adam's* apostate race *.

O blessed Lord, I am here afraid of darkening counsel, by words without knowledge! ah, how poorly do I speak of the excellencies of God! of the glory of thy kingdom, and the riches of the inheritance of the saints in light! It would require a *Moses* in the mount with God, and speaking with him face to face, to represent heaven in such a light as is worthy of it: yea a *Paul*, caught up into the third heavens, could not utter its glory. It would take the tongue of an angel, and a pen from the wing of a cherub, dipt in a ray of glory streaming from the throne of God and the Lamb, to write and describe the great and glorious things to be revealed, suitably to their dignity. And I fear that by such
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† Psal. xxxi. 19. 1 Cor. ii. 9.

* 2 Cor. iv. 17.

mean thoughts, and such low and disproportionate expressions of so great glory, I have been but disparaging the same and excellency thereof. O for a live coal taken from heaven's altar, and reached to me by the hand of a seraph, to touch my lips and heart, that I may be enabled to see more thoroughly, and express myself more becoming the dignity and glory of thy kingdom!

But, O majesty! am I therefore never to think of heaven, or speak of its glory, till I can think and speak in a way worthy of it? Would not this be to forget the heavenly city altogether, since in this dark tabernacle 'tis so far above my capacity, when yet thou commands us to *set our affections on things above*? And what should strangers and pilgrims on earth mind so much as their own country? Let my soul then say, *if I forget thee, O heavenly Jerusalem, let my right-hand forget her cunning, and let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember thee, and prefer thee to my chief joy*

O father of lights, I hope I have not been boldly and presumptuously prying into thy secrets. I desire with awful adoration to follow the light of thy word, which only reveals this glory, and where thou speakest to us not indeed in heaven's language, which cannot be uttered to us, or if uttered, could not be understood, but thou condescends in a language suitable to us in our dull organs. I confess indeed that by such low and childish expressions thereof, I have been rather darkning the glory which I would fain commend to myself and others, than magnifying and celebrating the same. But now I come, I think, to a more just uptaking thereof, by saying, 'tis a massy, weighty, hyperbolic glory, more than can be conceived or expressed. The most proper conception I attain of it, is to say, that 'tis above all conception, and that 'tis an incomprehensible and

ineffable glory. And 'tis safest to go forward in this kind of a dark negative discovery, that *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to consider, what God hath laid up for them that love him.*

We may know of certainty, that in heaven there is a seeing God, and a loving of God; and that this love will widen and expand the soul more and more to take in all that it can from the divine fulness: and that this sight and love will attract the heart unto the nearest union and communion with God, and stamp it with a likeness corresponding to all his amiable and ravishing excellencies. All this seems to be the proper notion of the happiness of a dependent, immortal, blessed spirit. But then, how clear and transfusing is the light; and how seraphic and transporting is the love, and what will be the raptures and extasies of these happy spirits in this; or with what transport they'll cry, *How great is his goodness, and how ravishing is his beauty*, who can conceive or express? In some other subjects, mens thoughts and discourses may rise above the matter, but here all our thoughts are narrow, lowring, and come infinitely short.

We may be sure again there is in heaven a perfect rest of soul in God, as a compleatly satisfying portion. For a full plenary acquiescence in the infinite good, seems also to be the proper notion of a spirit's happiness. They are perfectly happy in enjoying an object so great and so good, as nothing can be added to the same, and beyond it they need not seek for further satisfaction. But then how great this joy of the Lord is, or how energetic and transporting, when the immortal spirit, with its immortal vigour, not only penetrates into the highest heavens, but there also it shuts itself into its chief good, which also is infinite, who can express? And when the soul,
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having stretched out its enlarged capacity and desires to the utmost, shall yet be sensible there is infinitely more glory in heaven than it can have a capacity for : and when all its faculties being ten thousand times more and more transformed and elevated, shall still find a joy that's growing, and find light and love, and rapturous delight swelling in height, length, breadth and depth through all eternity ; can any conceive the boundless dimensions of so great glory ? imagination itself, that can rear up millions of worlds, and tower them upon one another, here it can do nothing to help us out, but leaves us altogether in the inquiry.

We may also be sure enough of a very sprightly activity of all the powers of the soul in their action upon God, and emotions to him in glory : and that the faculties being more and more distended, the manifestations of God will there be more and more ravishing. All this being essential to an active spirit, animated with the generous principles of love, zeal, joy, &c. As we cannot conceive its happiness without the same : so 'tis one of the highest ways of enjoying God, who being infinite, is most enjoyed by such a power or affection as can stretch out itself into a kind of infiniteness. Yea, what joy can be conceived without a constant emotion of the heart to the thing enjoyed ? and were once the inhabitants of heaven at the end of their desires, they would be at the end of their joy also. So that we must necessarily conclude a constant outgoing of the glorified to enjoy more and more of God endlessly and eternally. But then what high flames of seraphic love ; what vigorous activity of powers ; what strong raptures of joy, and what bursting expressions of praise and thankfulness, an infinite plenitude of excellencies more and more let out and enjoyed, will

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raise these elevated spirits unto, dazzles our apprehensions, and passeth all knowledge.

Yea, perhaps, there is not one in heaven this hour, no not of the highest order among the blessed there, but with humble and pleasing adoration are ready to say that *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered in our hearts to conceive, what God hath yet further laid up for us* here in this happy place. For when their knowledge has seen as far as it can, and their love hath stretched out itself to its utmost, there is yet something infinitely more amiable in God than ever they can see through, or find enough of love for. Angels and men, angels and arch-angels, cherubims and seraphims of glory, can never dive so deep in a boundless ocean of perfections, but they may still go deeper, and find new discoveries they had not a thought of before. Infinite excellencies may well be an inexhaustible fund of infinitely gradual discoveries, to allure, please and ravish them more and further through long eternity. And all this says, that the glory of heaven is ineffable and incomprehensible. In some other subjects we may exceed in our apprehensions, or swell in our expressions; but there can be no excess in the description of glory, yea no access to a full view of the same. Neither man nor angel can give such an account thereof, as satisfies wonder, but rather increases the same. 'Tis a knowledge this that is wonderful for us, 'tis high, we cannot attain it.

As the tribe of *Manasseh* was half on this side of *Jordan*, and half on the other side in the promised land; so a believer, one half of him is on earth, and the other half in heaven. For so lib is grace to glory, that the saints on earth attain to something of every enjoyment in heaven, tho' inconceivably short in degree. If the glory and happinels of the glorified is what *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered*

entered into the heart of man to conceive; so also a gracious soul, even while in the body, can tell of a knowledge that passeth knowledge, of a peace that passeth all understanding, and of a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory.

Art thou a gracious soul? Then I am sure thou lovest thy God, and calls thy Redeemer, the precious Christ; and thou art falling down in the humble and pleasing admiration of his redeeming love: and upon more than ordinary vouchsafements of his grace, thou art crying, *Thou art my God, I will exalt thee; the Lord is the portion of my cup; the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places*: and finding a growing satisfiedness of soul in God and the blessed Jesus, thou standest not still, as if thou hadst attained all thou would have, but thou reaches forward to have more and more of his grace, till grace meet with glory: and being sensible thy soul, like a bird in a cage of clay, is hampered and fettered with earth and flesh, thou art now and then crying, *O that I were as a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest!* And thus thy spirit is active and restless, till it come to the fullest enjoyment of God.

Yet all this time thou cannot, I am sure, express even to thine own self the sense of thy mind in these things. Let a believer say what he can to a carnal mind about Christ, about faith, love, joy in him, &c. the natural man cannot understand what he means, nor can he himself have a distinct adequate conception of what he has the sure experience of. He cannot describe it to himself, more than one can define the different relishes of what he tastes. The best the believer can say of it is, that 'tis a heaven upon earth, a heaven under the heavens, and that 'tis coming, seeing, loving, tasting, feeling, that will best manifest it.

He cannot account about the very beginning and first

first conveyance of the divine life into his soul; for, *as the wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, and cannot tell whence it comes, and whither it goes, so is every one that is born of God.* He finds indeed the Spirit of God, by secret passages, communicating a vital savour into his spirit. He finds grace, as the oil of gladness, secretly insinuating it self into his heart, with sweet and powerful illapses, and which no sooner hath touched his spirit, but it putteth a spiritual life, sense and motion in it. But then how all this is done, and with what deep and secret energy upon the soul, he cannot describe.

And as inexpressible is the sustenance of the spiritual life in the soul, and the recruiting of the same. The soul that was grovelling in the dust becomes elevate to heaven. The spirit that was dull is made like a flame of fire. The man that was bound and straitned in his spirit comes to great liberty and enlargement in prayer. The soul bowed down with sorrow and grief is made to rejoice in the Lord. And sometimes ere the man was aware, he is made like the chariots of *Aminadab*. But then what way this is, or by what workings of God's Spirit, or what workings are caused by it in ours, this he cannot express except in general, that *he put his band into the lock of the door and my bowels turned towards him.*

Yea there is not one operation or exercise of the new creature that can be expressed to the life. Hath a person got a clear view of Christ and his ravishing beauties? Then he finds such excellencies as are beyond his thoughts; tho' he finds thoughts beyond all the words or expressions he can make of them. Or hath one a manifestation of the divine love to himself in particular? He cannot express to others, nor yet conceive to himself, what great meaning is contained in such appropriating terms, *My Lord, and my God; I have the love of a God, the love of a Saviour,*

Saviour, he hath *loved me, and given himself for me!* So that the very attainments of believers here are ineffable and incomprehensible.

CONCLUSION.

A Soul panting for Glory.

WHERE there is the life of grace, it sets the soul a-longing for growth and perfection in grace, and heaven is the glory and perfection of the same.

Grace is the high elevation of the creature in his powers and affections heaven-wards. The new principles, the new life, light and taste, the soul receives in regeneration, draws and forms it to seek all possible nearness to Christ and to God in him, till it come even to his seat. Can any make such offers, or speak such language, says he, as Christ doth? Can any other tell me of a perfect deliverance from sin, and a perfect communion with God, and of a blessed honour, glory, immortality, and eternal life? And can these, or the like of these, be heard without desire, or desired without the most industrious endeavours to attain them?

As the man is, so is his strength: and as the nature and temper of his spirit is, so are his desires, designs and delights. If he is born of the flesh only, and so is a vile son of earth, then he minds only the things of the flesh, and pants after the dust of the earth. But if he is born of the Spirit, he favours the things of the Spirit, and pants for the pure enjoyments in glory. The sense and breath, the very pulse and motion of the divine life implanted in the soul tends natively, chiefly and ultimately to the nearest conformity to God and communion with him as the same is in glory.

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And I think, were I listening at the closet of some heaven-born soul, I might hear him breathing out the inward sense of his heart to this or the like purpose.

"Blessed Lord, thy Spirit hath spoken home to my heart, O sinner, enough of thy sins; thou hast gone far enough already following lying vanities and forsaking thine own mercy: thou hast forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewn out to thyself broken cisterns that can hold no water. And is this well done in thee? Is this thy kindness to God and to thine own soul? In this manner, O Lord, thou hast addressed my conscience. And now, what would I do or suffer to be wholly delivered from sin! what makes me groan being burdened is this, I find a body of sin dwelling in me as long as my soul dwells in its body. 'Tis this that puts me, but with submission, to long for the last and complete deliverance. At best my soul, while 'tis entangled in this flesh, 'tis like a bird confined in a cage or tied to a stone, which as soon as it thinks to soar high, is pull'd down again. O that the chains were broken, and the poor captive were released to its full liberty in the pure and ample regions above!

The pressing exigencies of my spirit make me groan and long for that happy state, where no incumbent evils shall any more molest me. What afflictive blindness of mind, hardness of heart, and deadness of spirit do many a time ly heavy on my soul! how often is the light of the soul quite dim, and as it were put out, with respect to the great things of God and of Christ, and the glorious things of heaven! and are not the active powers of my soul often listless and benumb'd as to spiritual exercises! I am often burdened with a heart that can neither melt for sin, nor warm in love to Christ as it should; how vexed is my soul many a time with the importu-

tunity of my corruption, even after many vows, prayers, and wrestlings at the footstool of God's throne for conquest and victory! when I think to get my heart up to heaven, how soon doth it sit down upon the earth again! when I think to keep it serious, lively and watchful, how soon doth it become dull and careless again! O that there were nothing of all this! O for that happy day, when all the clouds of darkness shall be dispell'd from my mind! and when no unbelief, no lust, nor evil passion, nor any sin shall ever turn me away from my God or provoke him to turn away from me! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?

I find such small degrees of grace, and so great weaknesses cleaving to my best performances, as makes me also, being burdened, to groan earnestly, that I may be clothed with immortality and eternal life. I sadly complain that my contrition for sin is not melting enough, and that my hatred of sin is not deep enough, nor extirpating enough. O for a firm aversion of heart to all evil, and a perfect hatred of every false way! O for an unalterable conversion of the heart and soul unto God, and an everlasting shooting forth all the powers of the soul unto him! O for heaven, where all this is in perfection, and as the heart would wish!

How weak is my understanding in the things of God! and how infirm is my persuasion of them! how else could I find it so hard a thing to believe! unless I see some visible way of performance, or unless I see or find something created without or within to be a support of faith? How could I suffer myself to be so much and so often hurried and inveigled with worldly things, if my assent to the truths of the gospel, and my persuasion of them were such as they should be? Why do I not always think that the All-suffici-

sufficiency of God and the fulness of the Mediator are enough for me? They are enough for all in heaven through eternity, and why not enough to me in time? This could not happen, unless there was a defect in my persuasion, either of the reality, or of the excellency, or of the suitableness of the things unseen and eternal contained in the promises. But in heaven there is no more darkness nor doubting, no more inevidence of things unseen, nor any unsuitableness unto them. But as they are there fully persuaded of the promises, so they fully embrace them and are fully possessed of them.

I am also sadly exercised, that my trust and confidence in my Redeemer is oftentimes very low! how often doth my weakness in this betray me into jealous thoughts of God, after all the many promises on his part, and some sweet experience on mine! how happy a thing, were it, if I always attained to such a full recumbency on the Lord, as might, be a pleasant settlement and rest to the otherwise tossed and perplexed soul! O for heaven! where there is no innate darkness of mind to gender fears and horrors: and where there is no unbelief to raise the black uneasy passions of jealousy, suspicion and distrust, nor any carnal reason to forge arguments for strengthening dark and dismal apprehensions, and where God is fully seen to be dwelling in love!

The coldness also of my love to the lovely and loving Redeemer fills me often with bitter regret of soul, I am far from being satisfied with the degree or the expressions of my love. How could there be so often such unlistiness in spiritual exercises, such weariness in duties, and such distraction of heart in them, if there were not a coldness of affection? Why so seldom meditations of Christ? How could the world and the things of the world get so near my heart? Why do I not every day, and every hour of the day, count
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all this but loss and dung in comparison of Christ, if there were not sad decays and intermissions of love? O that it were otherwise with me! O that I could love thee more, O Lord, and serve thee better! O to have all removed out of the way that would divert me from Christ, and to have nothing to do but to love him, and be satiate with his love! O for heaven, the very element of love! where they dwell in love, and dwell in God by love!

Yea I am often harassed with a fear, lest I be short of the true grace of God, as frequently the case of my soul is like theirs, whose light is neither clear nor dark. So I often fear, lest there being left us a promise of entering into rest, I should come short of the same. And this sets me a longing for the mount of vision, that I may be beyond the land of darkness and doubts. There is a form of godliness which is not godliness; and there are images of grace which are not grace; there is something like faith, and something like repentance, and something like love, which are not them, but only semblances of them. There is something like the new man, which is but the old man dressed up again. The pangs of travail may bring forth, when yet the child may be dead; it may have the external lineaments when life is wanting. This makes me often to be afraid, lest my soul designed for a temple where God may dwell, should be only swept and not washen, or only garnished with the pictures of grace, and not in-wrought with the embroidery work of the Spirit. This and the like of this often causes anxiety of mind, which cannot but be very great, when an eternity of misery, or happiness is determined by the question. And hence I am often in a serious enquiry and examination about my state God-wards. And lest my faith should be only a vain presumption, I try it by repentance, humility, love, patience and obedience. And

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lest again my repentance be only a legal conviction, or my humility be only a distrustful abjection of spirit, or my love be only a flash, or my patience be only indolence and stupidity, or my obedience be only slavish or Pharisaical; I try them all by that faith that rests only on Christ for pardon and righteousness, and inspires the soul with the generous and active principles of a divine life. But yet, O how hard is it to attain and maintain full satisfaction in a point of so great and infinite concern! hence my spirit within me pants and breathes for these lightsome regions, where there is not any sin and where no doubts, no remains of unbelief, no mournful desertion, nor any misfortune in the bodily constitution, can hinder the full sense of Christ's love, or the soul's satisfying rest in the same.

The hard labours of the Christian life make me long for that happy place above, where the service is at once more noble and easy. Here I have a deceitful heart, a busy devil, and an ensnaring world always to watch and wrestle against. There are allurements on the right hand, and affrightments on the left; and there are sly as well as impetuous lusts. Who is sufficient! I have the world to crucify, the flesh to mortify, and self to deny. I have many a temptation to resist and overcome; many a cross to bear; many a boisterous storm to face; and at length the gloomy valley of death to pass. O to be fairly through all these difficulties, and landed on the other side of them! O to be above all things that would draw away my heart from Christ and heaven! O to be safely through the last conflict, and past the light of sun, moon, and stars, into the glorious light of God's countenance always shining on the soul.

The natural vanity of my mind, and its many impertinent excursions from God, is very irksome. It cannot but cause a distressing vexation in my spirit,

to find that though I have a mind that is always in thought, and though God is the most excellent and delectable object; and though it is as easy to think on him as on any other thing, that yet my thoughts are so seldom with him! 'Tis the burdensome sense of this that makes me groan for that happy state; where the vision of God is so clear, and likeness to him so perfect, that nothing can be seen either in God or out of him, that can possibly turn away the heart from him.

When I got my soul to be awfully composed, serious and sublime, and thought I might now say, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed; yet, what by the many interposing objects of sense, and what by the natural levity of my spirit, how soon doth my soul fly off again! I have relented this many a time with deep concern; and many a prayer I have put up to heaven for heart establishing grace

O blessed Lord, 'tis not a transient beam, lightly glancing on the head, that I would be at; but 'tis an impression of thy Spirit upon my heart; and not a slight impression, making only a stir in the sensitive powers and affections, but such as penetrates into the bottom of my soul, and diffuses itself thro' all the faculties, powers and passions of it, and transforms me altogether into thy likeness. 'Tis not a pang of devotion or a start of the affections that I would have; but 'tis to live always in faith, in fear, in love, in earnest dependence on the Lord, and humble subjection to his will. I would fain that my affections to things spiritual were lively and not dull, and at hand not ay to seek. I would have them so strong as to bear down all opposition, and victorious in getting the upper hand of all temptations. I would have them more unmixed and pure, so as to have less of the creature and more of God in them: and I would fain that all this were the fixed, permanent, unalter-

able state of my soul. O when shall it once so be? in heaven it will be so, when the glorified saint shall be as a pillar in the temple of his God, and shall go no more out.

I have had as much experience of the vanity of all things under the sun, as may be more than sufficient to convince me, that none of these things can make up a happiness for a soul, and to set me a longing for these blessed lands, where is no more any curse.

I have been trying whether this or that thing in the world can make up a portion, or give rest to an immortal spirit: and after a thousand experiments, and as many sad disappointments, I find all is vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities, and vexation of spirit.

Earthly enjoyments are indeed grateful and entertaining to the bodily senses and appetites, but should this be counted enough? if this were enough, what is my soul good for? What have I done with it, or for what good use can it serve? What can a spirit make of clods of earth, or of barns full of corn, or bags full of gold? I may as well imagine I can feed my body with thoughts, as satisfy my soul with earth, and what grows of earth. But O blessed Lord, 'tis in thee that spirits live; 'tis in dependence on thy vital breath, and in sharing of thy vital influences that they live and live eternally. And there are many myriads of spirits originally of no higher nature than mine own, who are this day standing about thy throne, and drinking in the refreshing streams of life from the great fountain. And O God of the spirits of all flesh, this is what above all things I desire, even to lead my life with thee, and to spend my time and eternity in thy presence!

Indeed while I enjoy God in my worldly enjoyments, while I use and improve them as streams issuing from covenant love, and while I taste that the Lord is good in every good under the sun, I want
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not content in them : but in themselves, and as they are divided from the good-will of him that dwelt in the bush, I find they are not only vanity, but even vexation of spirit, and in the midst of laughter leave the heart sad. And this world, as it is not suitable to the nature and capacity of the soul, so as little to its immortal and eternal duration. I have something in me, which as it is better than the luggage of this flesh, so it outlives it. Why then should I place my chief satisfaction in any of the five senses ? How soon will it be ere my soul shall taste as little of bodily delights as my flesh shall relish of them, when laid in the grave and turned into dust ! but O eternal being ! O Father and rest of spirits ! I come to thee and stay my soul on thee for being and blessedness for evermore. I have been considering my abode in this world, that long it cannot be ; I have also been considering thy design in placing me in it, and I find that according to it I should own myself under no other relation to this world, but that of a stranger and pilgrim therein, and as a sojourner therein, be travelling Zion-ward, and training up my soul for a blessed immortality and eternal life to be enjoyed in thy presence. And now this is all my desire, to be where thou art, and where I may see thy glory.

Vain world ! how serious are thy sorrows, and how empty are thy comforts ! and when the two eternities shall meet again, when the eternity before and the eternity after shall swallow up this small period of time that hath as it were interveened betwixt them, and when all the revolutions of summer and winter, spring and harvest, night and day, shall be shrivelled as into nothing, being swallowed up for ever in vast eternity ; then farewell time and all its enjoyments for ever. Surely then, the man whose hope is only in this world, walketh in a vain shew. Surely he is disquieted in vain. And now Lord, what wait I for ! my

hope is only in thee. O that I knew where I might find thee, that I may come even unto thy seat!

My love, such as it is to God and the blessed Jesus, draws out my heart in very earnest desires, for the nearest communion with the Father and the Son. I cannot think of being bounded in such a narrow province, as I find my soul in, while pent up in a body, and confined in flesh. I would fain love the Lord with a perfect love, and fain be where they enlarge upon love, and enlarge upon love for ever. O that I were where there is nothing to cause any estrangement from God, or any restraint of divine love thro' eternity, and where there is all the delight that perfect love to God, and a perfect sense of his love, can raise the affectionate soul unto! I groan here as one that cannot bear any strangeness or distance between me and him whom my soul loveth: I fix hatred on sin, because it interposes to alienate my heart from God. And I cry unto thee, O Lord, for thy gracious Spirit to assist me in pursuing hard after thee, till I come where thou art, and where thou shews forth all thy glory.

I have found at times such refreshing consolations in God as manifested in Christ Jesus my Lord, as makes me think and long for a full draught of the rivers of pleasures that are in his presence. O the sweet relishes of the soul when spirituality reigns in it! O the high complacency and sublime delight which a soul finds, when refined from earth, and purged from carnal affections! blessed Lord, there is a purer sweetness and pleasure in mortifying the flesh, and subduing its lusts, in dying to the world, and living to God, in loving, praying and meditating, in trusting in the Lord with all my heart, and walking humbly with my God, than in all the varnished pleasures of sin, or the perishing pleasures of sense. Hence I long for the pure waters of life, which flow from the throne

throne of God and the Lamb ! O to partake of divine delights, as they flow immediately from God, without being flattered or interrupted in the conveyance !

I feel something of an ardour, and restless desire of spirit, to serve the Lord my God, and to do for his honour and glory. But how narrow is the round of my service, and more narrow is my capacity ! 'tis the separate soul made ardent and active with the sacred fire of love, and having nothing now to dull or divert it, that will walk more at large and be at more liberty to serve thee as it would. And its employment also will be of a more sublime kind, than what I can now in the body come near unto. O ! to be amongst the number of these happy, happy, happy spirits, who being of a high capacity and sublime genius, with a vigorous activity, can serve thee day and night in thy temple in a service so noble and great, as that ours, in comparison of theirs, is but like drudgery in a kitchen, in comparison of the highest officers of state ministers.

Knowledge is pleasant, and a growing increase therein is very entertaining : for, if light is sweet, and if 'tis a pleasant thing with the eyes to behold the light of the sun : what is it to behold truth itself, and goodness itself ! what to behold primogenial light ! what to behold with a full eye the glory of God, shining in the face of Jesus Christ, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his Father's person !

O that I could see more of the divine essence and perfections ! I am sensible I cannot by searching find out God, I cannot by searching find out the almighty unto perfection. O great and incomprehensible BE-ING ! I call thee *light* ! but then 'tis a notion taken from the resemblance of created light, and that thou art not. I call thee the *most eminent of Beings* : but then it disparages thee to rank any thing in the de-

gree of being with thee, before whom all things are as nothing, yea less than nothing and vanity. I call thee BEING itself; but then all the creatures are lost in this conception, and I am never a whit nearer the conceiving what thou art. I call thee *excellent*, and I add *infinite* to this, by which I acknowledge that I am under an everlasting impossibility of ever comprehending what thou art. Only I'm sure there are views of thee in heaven, as much above what I can attain upon earth, as seeing face to face is above seeing in a glass. I beseech thee shew me thy glory!

'Tis also above my reach to understand what is that sensible glory, surrounding the divine majesty, with which light he is said to be covered as with a garment: and whether the divine *Shechinah* appearing to the patriarchs of old was a prelude or resemblance of this glory: and whether it may not be as entertaining to pure glorified spirits, as to the spiritualized senses of glorified bodies. 'Tis certain there is no repugnancy in thinking it is: for if sense is not truly resident in the body but in the soul, and if 'tis not the eye but the soul through the eye that sees, which can either see in dreams when the eye is closed, or see none at all through deep contemplation, tho' the eyes are both open and sound. And so it may be easily conceived in general, that a separate soul may see a sensible glory, though without bodily organs; but how, and in what manner, can be cleared up only in heaven, that region of light.

But, except the divine essence itself, there is nothing so mysterious as that wonderful union among the sacred three in one divine nature. How hard is it for us to conceive of the same, without admitting either a trinity of gods, or a trinity only of names and notions; while yet the unity of the Godhead forbids the one, and their different personal properties and actions are inconsistent with the other. 'Tis

in heaven this mystery will be so conceived, as that there shall be no hazard of distraction in the mind of the worshippers on the one hand, or of confusion on the other. The rapturous harmony and consistence of being reduced to unity, while worshipping a holy trinity, and of adoring a sacred trinity while they are worshipping one God, will there be best understood.

The incarnation of the Son of God is another mystery, wherein our shallow minds soon lose themselves. We may be distinct and certain enough in the general, that God may be more present with some than with others, and this in degree infinitely different; that is, he is more present with angels than with insects, and so proportionally in all the intermediate degrees of beings, and in the transcendent degrees also. And hence there is the less difficulty in conceiving him present with some creature in the utmost degree, and the utmost degree can be no less than infinite. But yet so great is this mystery of God manifested in the flesh, that no man can reach it, nor yet what may be the great and weighty designs of so strange a dispensation; the fullest view of this is reserved for heaven.

The happy way of living that angels and pure spirits have is also above our capacity. We may indeed conceive they are perfectly entertained with truth, goodness, purity, order, and such like amiable excellencies, as they find them in themselves and in one another, and especially as they see them originally and infinitely in God; but how much their ideas and apprehensions are different from ours, and how as much more clear as the seeing of things in their own naked being is a more perfect knowledge, than a seeing only images and emanations from objects; all this is not to be known till the soul hath passed beyond all the shadows and darkness of this state.

The great designs of providence are for the most part out of our sight. 'Tis a mystery to think that the gospel should be confined within such narrow territories as we find it is. 'Tis a mystery that so few of the Christian nations have retained our holy religion in its pure and primitive simplicity. 'Tis a mystery to think how few shall be saved, notwithstanding the Saviour is so mighty. But as little do we know how far the consequences of the incarnation of the Son of God may extend to the utmost ends of the earth. And as little know we what interest the numberless beings that replenish the vast heavens have in our *Immanuel* and his incarnation: in comparison of whom, though all the race *Adam* had been left to perish finally, they might not be one to many, many millions of happy beings. Yea as little is it known or considered, how far the depraved tempers of such as perish becomes in its nature their very eternal misery. They are voluntarily here under the power of their irregular appetites and passions; and in eternity being destitute of all objects that give them satisfaction, and despairing ever to enjoy them, the desires that before were voluntary becoming now involuntary and perfectly penal, this makes a bed in hell to them.

But all these mysterious riddles of the divine providence in general, and all the dark passages thereof in special with respect to churches, families and persons, about which we are here spending many uncertain guesses, will be all clearly explained in heaven; when the books shall be opened, and the records of eternity shall be exposed to open view, and when it shall be seen that the most intricate and perplexed methods of providence have been guided by a steady hand, to an end worthy of God, and that a blessed issue shall commend and crown all the works of God. O blessed Lord, I know not what is in the womb of thy de-

decrees concerning myself or others, nor the great designs thy parturient providence is in travail with. Only I am sure in the general, that whatever thou hast purposed shall be in the execution just and righteous, good and gracious. But in heaven the exact aptitude and order of all things, is clearly and fully looked to: and there 'tis to be seen, that lo! here were designs laid, and lo! there was the apt connection of one thing with another, and their fit dependencies to answer their great end, which in this state appeared so full of mystery and intricacy.

How strangely am I outwitted, even in my own make! matter and spirit are linked together! a spirit clings to a body, and a body is fastened to a spirit! how is this? Lord, *I am fearfully and wonderfully made!* how a spirit is impressed with a body, and how a body is animated by a spirit, or how a soul can move the extreme parts of the body, hands, feet, &c. at pleasure, and yet not have the same command over the motions that are within the veins, arteries, nerves, and lymphatic vessels, which one would think more nearly under the immediate influence of its vital union with its body. These and such like mysteries are reserved for their more full explication in heaven. And how again such a small fluid thing, as the seat of the memory, can either contain or retain the vast collection of images wherewith 'tis enriched; and how it can bring them forth in order without any jumble, is another mystery not to be accounted for, while in the body. And no less puzzled are we about the fantastic principle in us, and its boundless capacity, which transcends the breadth of the earth, and mounts above all the heavens. As also what kind of power it is, whether as distinct from sense, or as that which is called the intellect. And since it can exercise itself in some motions that sense has nothing to do with, whether it may not be one of these powers that go
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with the soul into the other world. These, and a thousand other mysteries in our make and frame, will be all clearly seen into in that land of light. And 'tis no wonder then, that the serious and inquisitive soul shall long for heaven, where there is a more full solution of all these difficulties, and a more full clearing of all these mysteries; where they shall see more of the mystery of an infinitely perfect Being, the mystery of the Trinity, and of the incarnation of the Son of God, the mysteries of providence, and what relates to the nature, offices, orders and excellencies of the angels, these princes in glory; and all the mysteries about the nature, origin, spirituality, activity and immortality of our own souls. How lightsome is thy land, O *Immanuel!* where all veils are drawn aside, and clouds dispelled, and mysterious riddles are clearly expounded. No wonder there is a longing. 'Tis rather a wonder the heart does not break with a longing, it can contain no longer, to these lands of light and glory!

True it is, there is a natural aversion to death. Man is against dying, as being a dissolution of nature. His body, could it say ought, would declare itself against death, as being an undoing of it. And even the soul, that can live without its body, has contracted such a fondness for it, as that 'tis loath to part with it. 'Tis also true, there may be some very melancholy circumstances in dying; the conflicts of the last moments may be very sharp, and the last convulsions of nature very violent: yea, the soul, which is the better part in man, may be so entangled and disturbed with the untuneableness of its organ, as not to be able to do any thing agreeable to its character.

But, excepting such melancholy circumstances, I may take up death, if in readiness for it, in a very easy view, and set it before me in a very comfortable light. I put off indeed the body of this flesh, but do I not
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with it put off also the body of sin and corruption? I was designed to carry about with me this machine, and to animate and rule it for a season, as being necessary for a life to be transacted, and a service to be done in this lower world; but when raised to the world above, where higher service is to be done, I have not that use for it, and why should I grudge to lay by an instrument, when I have no more occasion for it, and can do better without it?

I have many a time found much incumbrance from the body. Its appetites have muted the feathers, and cleft the wings of my soul, when it should have soared on high in faith, love, and meditation. Besides, I have found many painful sensations of hunger, thirst, cold, sickness, pain &c. and all through the means of my corruptible flesh. And why should I be so unwilling to put off the shoe that so much pinches me?

'Tis the interest of my body, that hath so often stood in competition with the more valuable concerns of my precious soul. When it should have obeyed, like an imperious hand-maid, it hath usurped the command. And many a sinful and sad division it hath made in my heart between God and the world. And should not death be welcomed, as freeing me from these snares, and leaving no principle within to rebel and war against the soul?

O! what cares, burdens, and troubles of every kind, am I liable unto in the body! the afflictions I have in common with men, are none of my greatest troubles; sickness, pain, &c. are but small things, in comparison of the distress of the soul under a sense of sin, or a sense of divine desertion, or an apprehension of divine anger. 'Tis these, and the like of these, that cause the heaviest damps of spirit; and 'tis such hard exercises as these that set me a longing for the

the regions of light, love, peace, joy, and assurance for ever.

The darkness of my beclouded mind makes me long for a full, and not again to be interrupted, sight of the light of God's countenance. The dull, dark, and ineffective knowledge I have of the great and important truths of the gospel, makes me long to be altogether inwrought with these truths, and cast into their mould. The slipperiness of my mind, when it would bend to spiritual things, makes me long to be as a pillar in the temple of my God, that I may no more wander or go out from him. The great difficulty I find in working off an ill frame, and the no less difficulty there is in retaining a good one, makes me long to be as those ministering spirits, who are like flames of sacred fire, and with an immortal vigour, and eternal vivacity do his pleasure. The many ups and downs in my soul, whereby it hath been tossed between fear and hope, as between heaven and hell, makes me long to be on the other side of that great gulph that finally parts them: the labour I sustain in watching, and the much greater distress I find in not watching enough, makes me long to be in that peaceful country, where no enemy can appear, and where there is no danger to fear for ever. When I pray, how long is it before I can get a deep and lively sense of the things I pray for! when I meditate, how hard is it to get my heart composed and fixed, and my thoughts unite! this sets me a longing for that happy place, where having a full sight of God, and full uptaking of spiritual things, they can say, *O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed*, and I will sing. In praising the Lord, the most I attain unto here is a saying heavily enough, *Hosannab, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord to save us, Hosannab in the highest*: while the great company in heaven, with the most distended and unincumbred minds.

minds, and with the highest elevation of affections, are saying, *Allelujah allelujah; salvation and glory honour and power, unto the Lord our God*. And this sets me a longing to be among them: for *blessed especially are they that dwell in thy higher house, O Lord; for there they ever praise thee*. And though death lies in the way, I am willing to pass it, that I may reach to that triumphant assembly.

Did death make an end of a man: were it a total extinction of his nature; and did all his perceptions after it cease for ever: or if all on the other side of death were but dark territories and dismal regions, or as an empty barren solitude, destitute of all things that immortal spirits could live on; much more if there was nothing beyond it, but that utter and eternal darkness, *where there is nothing but weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth*: then it were impossible not to be affrighted with death as being the most terrible thing in nature, even the terrible of terribles.

But if *Immanuel*, with* all his fulness, dwells in the land beyond it: if death enter us into a world that's well stored, and furnished with every thing that's good and pleasant; this is sufficient to make a gracious soul long to be gone into the world of spirits, and to be made happy in the way and manner that blessed spirits are so. And what though I disappear in this world, if it be to appear more gloriously in the next? What though I vanish out of sight here, if it be to make a more solemn and splendid appearance in a better company, where the enjoyments are more excellent, and the employments more sublime!

'Tis indeed an awful thing to die? 'tis a soul's going out of this world never to return to it any more. 'Tis a soul's going out of time to eternity, there to be happy or miserable, according to that state and temper of mind wherewith it departs. 'Tis a setting
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a naked soul before the righteous and enlightened tribunal of God, there to receive its final sentence. But do I unfeignedly repent, believe, and turn to the Lord with all my heart? Is my *conscience purged from dead works to serve the living God*? Have I renounced my sins and vanities, and renounced likewise all confidence in mine own righteousness, and sheltering my soul under the wings of the Mediator? Am I *fighting the good fight of faith*, in a daily mortifying of every sin, and a daily crucifying of the world? And do I trust, that through the grace and strength of my Redeemer, I shall be helped through the last conflict with the last enemy? Then I'll have courage to die; I'll die with mine own consent; *Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will not fear, being in hope that thou wilt be with me, and that thy rod and thy staff shall comfort me.*

I am sensible death will make a very great change upon me. It will turn me out of this world, to live in a new world I have little acquaintance with. It will turn me out of this body to live as a naked soul. It will turn me out of all sensible earthly comforts to live as spirits live. And what of all this? Is not a little while long enough to stand gazing on the theatre of this world for any good that's to be had by it? what is that good that's to be seen under the sun, where surely every man walks in a vain shew, and where surely every man is *disquieted in vain*? Why should I be unwilling to step aside and quit a scene of life, where there is nothing but a coming over the same things over and over again? providence keeps much the same walk, and nature has much the same face through all ages of the world, and through all the successions of time: that which hath been is now, and that which is to be hath already been: and what's the great odds, whether a man stands gazing on the world

world forty, or five hundred years, when all he gets is but seeing the same sights but so much the oftner? Or what matters it, whether he take many or only a few turns on the stage of this life, when his road and walk is much the same? Besides, die when I will, 'tis but the present moment of life I can lose; for I cannot lose any life, but that which I am in possession of, and that's only the present moment: for the time past was mine, but it is no more so, and the time to come is not yet mine, and may never be so: whether then I die, old or young, the loss I suffer by death is much the same, if there be any loss at all in it. And who can think there is, who lives in a lively exercise of faith? of that faith that *is the evidence of things unseen, and the substance of things hoped for*; that faith that *looks not to things seen and temporal, but to things unseen and eternal*, and not with a shy look or a careless glance, but looks to them steadily, with a fixed view, and with such an appropriating eye, as can claim them as his own, and as the goods laid up for him, not for many years only, but through endless eternity.

○ O blessed Lord I am not weary of life. I have as many of the comforts of this world as I need, and more than I deserve! nor am I wearying of the business of life, nor of the trials and conflicts of this my militant state. I think I am willing through thy grace, and when 'tis for thy glory, to bear the burden and heat of the day. But yet I would not chuse to live always. I would not chuse to be always where there is such imperfection in grace, such short coming in service, and such trouble from corruption. I would not always live where so much time is lost in sleep and inactivity, so much in trivial matters, so much in low business, so much in a chase of things that never give satisfying content, and especially where there is so much distance from God. 'Tis heaven I would be

at, as 'tis the proper place of all excellencies, as 'tis the purity and perfection of the soul, as 'tis our perfect rest after all the labour, and troubles of this life, as 'tis the satisfaction of all our desires, and as 'tis the very joy of our Lord. *And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.*

And O! how pleasant and how refreshing is it to an immortal soul, so to believe, so to hope, so to wait, and so to live, as one that thinks the nearer he is to death, the nearer he is to his own country, the nearer a sight of his own land the nearer an end of a tempestuous dangerous voyage, and the nearer a safe arrival in a pleasant and delightful haven! and now when the Spirit says, *Come, and the bride says, Come, even so let my soul say, Come, come Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen."*

F I N I S



